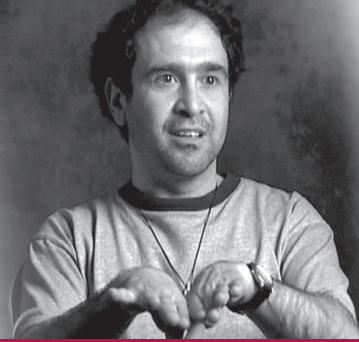


**ASYLUM
SEEKERS
EAT OUR
DONKEYS**



**OFFICIAL
ASYLUM
TEARING
UK APART**

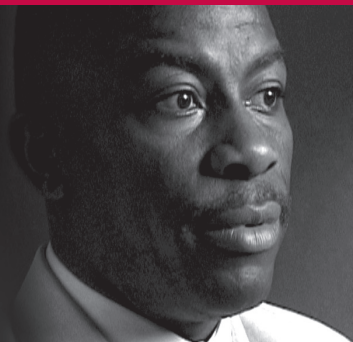


The RAM Report

Campaigning for fair and accurate coverage
of refugees and asylum-seekers

THE MYTH

**Refugees get
smart clothes,
mobiles, flash
cars and take
our homes..**



THE TRUTH

**They get flats
no one wants,
£38 a week
to live on and
no luxuries**



**Media
Wise**

Refugees,
Asylum-seekers & the
Media (RAM) Project



**EXILED
JOURNALISTS
NETWORK**

Advice, support and training of
exiled journalists in the UK

The RAM Report

**A review of the MediaWise Refugees, Asylum-seekers
and the Media (RAM) Project, 1999-2005**

**Editors: Rich Cookson
Mike Jempson**

May 2005

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the Home Office National Refugee Integration Forum**

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MediaWise is the new name for The PressWise Trust. This change was made in 2005.



MediaWise

Advice, information, research
& training on media ethics

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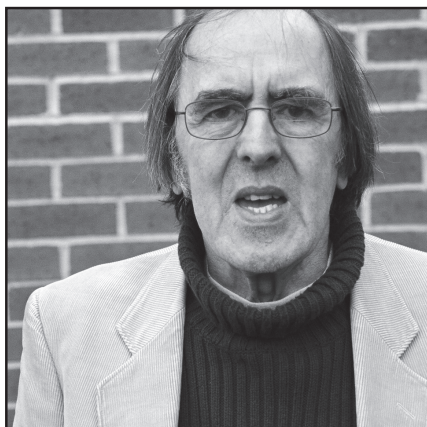
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Brian Jones is a former Deputy Editor of *The Guardian*, founder of The Guardian Foundation, and currently an adviser to the RAM Project.

Foreword

Election time, and a party canvasser approached me in the street, his two small children in tow. "Anything that worries you in particular? We might have the answer," he said. "Yes," I replied, "Asylum-seekers and refugees." His face lit up. "Ah yes, but don't despair – we've made it very clear we'll crack down on them," he said. "That's what worries me," I answered. "Your ideas are even worse than what's happening already." For a moment his surprise left him speechless.

That chance encounter seemed to sum up the opportunism of some politicians when it comes to asylum and its implications. The climate of hostility surrounding the subject is worsened by nastier elements in the tabloid press which have sought to nourish the prejudices already fed by popular misconceptions and some bizarre reporting.

Stories about asylum-seekers eating swans (pictured left, *The Sun*, 4 July 2003) or the equally-spurious nocturnal donkey-feast, might in other circumstances be dismissed as grotesque jokes. But the page-one treatment given them by *The Sun* and the *Daily Star* respectively ensured that they took on the role at least for a time of urban myths – to be repeated in queues and pubs, or to the next reporter with a notebook or microphone who turns up in search of an opinion on asylum-seekers.

Such insidious nonsense is not new. Similar prejudices against would-be immigrants were nourished in the 1930s by the briefly fascism-flirting *Daily Mail* and its associates under the first Lord Rothermere. But many journalists who escaped from Hitler or Stalinist lands later greatly benefited the British press. Indeed, it is a great irony that while tabloids denigrate refugees, scarcely a week goes by without the upmarket papers carrying an obituary of yet another distinguished contributor to our national life who was once a refugee or child of refugees.

But the dafter kind of daily press diet appears in tandem with a steady accompaniment of scare stories not so much about asylum-seekers or refugees but about foreign scroungers (such as the *Daily Express* front page, bottom left, from 20 Jan 2004). The reality in Home Office figures (reported in *The Guardian*, 9 March 2005) is that only 21 of the 133,000 east European workers registered here had signed on for benefits.

To counter such nonsense has been one of the aims of the Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Media (RAM) Project launched in 1999 by PressWise (now MediaWise). Through workshops and bulletins, networking and dialogue with community organisations and refugee support groups, the Project has sought to encourage a fairer picture in the local and national media. RAM's *Directory of Exiled Journalists*, updated online, is one obvious link for journalists. Another minor but nonetheless important victory has been the adoption by the Press Complaints Commission of guidelines seeking, with some success, to eradicate such misnomers as 'illegal' asylum-seekers.

The RAM Project will soon be handed on to other campaigners who know much more has to be done. But MediaWise, among its other tasks, has pioneered an honourable role in persuading us all to think a little harder about the media's reporting on immigrant strangers in need.

Brian Jones



Introduction

The RAM Report is both an account of 'work in progress' and a guide to action for people who believe that a particular social group is receiving unfair or inaccurate media coverage. It has been produced in response to frequent requests for advice and information about the Project from all over Europe. Rich Cookson has had access to all our files, and has been free to interview anyone involved.

The first part of the report explains how the RAM Project came into being, and how it developed as circumstances changed and new challenges presented themselves. The second part describes specific elements of the Project, with aims, costings, achievements and lessons learned. This section is designed to provide other interest groups with ideas about how they may try to resolve their own problems with the media.

The report ends with keynote speeches and articles, a diary of some of the events the Project has been associated with, and a selection of useful websites about refugees and asylum-seekers.

We also see this report as a form of accountability to our funders – we have been lucky that, even when public funds have been entrusted to us, there has been no interference in how we set about our task.

Most of those involved in developing and delivering the Project's services are journalists who are conscious of their special responsibility to the public.

There have been times when we have all felt overwhelmed and inadequate to the task – not least in finding the funds to continue. I would like to thank all those who have worked on the Project, and those who have provided advice, guidance, support and funding.

It has been a privilege to meet and work with so many exiled journalists who have striven to come to terms with their new lives, far from family and friends, and cope with the realisation that some of the problems they face in the UK stem from the work of their colleagues in the media here. Their determination has brought a special dynamism to the Project.

Equally important has been the enthusiasm and commitment of all those individuals from church groups, community organisations, trade unions and refugee support groups who have devoted time and energy as members of the RAM networks. Between us we cannot claim to have solved all the problems with reporting of asylum and refugee issues in the UK, but we have engaged with refugees, asylum-seekers, concerned citizens and working journalists in a way that has resulted in fairer and more accurate media coverage.

We hope that this report – and in particular its description of the lessons we have learned – will encourage others to see how dialogue and engagement can make a real difference to how the media operates.

Mike Jempson, MediaWise Director

What is MediaWise?

Formerly known as PressWise, the MediaWise Trust is a registered charity which began as a voluntary organisation in 1993, set up by 'victims of media abuse' backed by sympathetic journalists and media lawyers. The Trust champions press freedom and responsible journalism, and is committed to the promotion of accurate and fair reporting. It provides:

- Advice to members of the public affected by inaccurate or unfair print or broadcast coverage;

- Information about media ethics, law and regulation, and how the media operate;

- Research into aspects of media practice, representation of minority groups, and media regulation;
- Training for community groups on how to make best use of the media, and for journalists about more effective ways of reporting problematic issues.



MediaWise has a rights-based approach to media ethics. It believes that:

- press freedom is a responsibility exercised on behalf of the public;
- the public has a right to expect accurate information from the media, and should be informed promptly when inaccurate information is published;
- those treated unfairly by the media are entitled to independent advice.

MediaWise employs experienced journalists and collaborates with NGOs, media and academic bodies and international agencies. Projects include:

- Children and the media (since 1997)
- Media and diversity (since 1997)
- Health and the media (since 1998)
- Suicide and the media (since 2001)
- Journalism and public trust (since 2004)

MediaWise journalists have devised and delivered training programmes for media professionals and non-governmental organisations in over 25 countries, with the International Federation of Journalists, the British Council, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO, among others.



ON THE RECEIVING END

Exiled journalists speak out

A 15-minute documentary about the experience of seeking asylum, and exiled journalists' reaction to media coverage in the UK.

View the trailer at:
www.omniproductions.co.uk

Price: £15 (incl postage and packing)
Call: 0117 9415889 or email ram@mediawise.org.uk





Left: Anti-refugee cartoon from *The Sun*, 7 Dec 1998; below (top to bottom): *Daily Mail*, 30 Nov 1998; *The Sun*, 9 Dec 1998; *Daily Express*, 8 June 1998

Origins of the Project

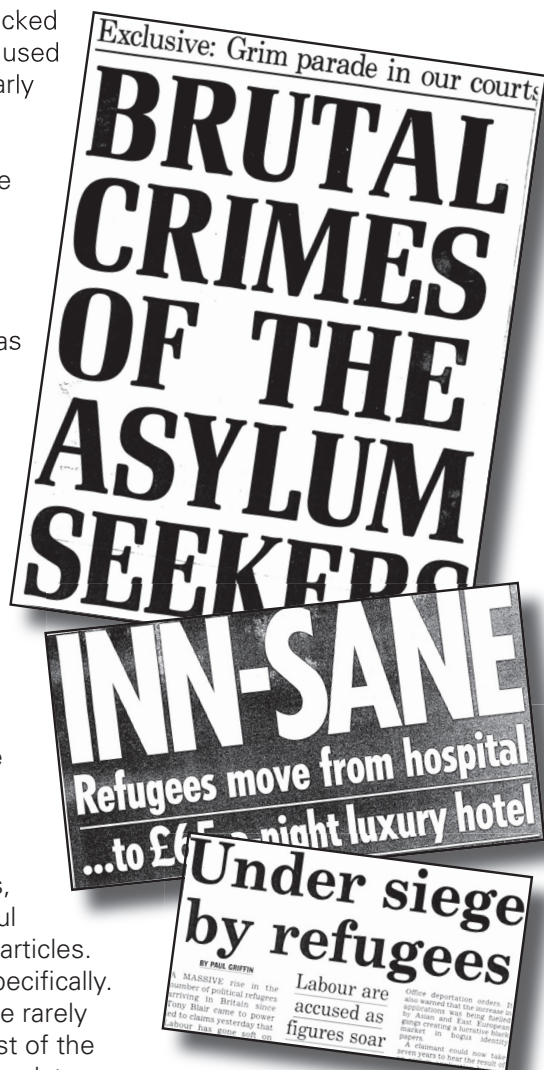
Throughout the 1990s, increasing numbers of people contacted PressWise, as it was then known, about stories that unfairly attacked refugees, Roma and New Age Travellers. Many of these articles used pejorative language, included misleading statistics and had a clearly prejudicial tone.

“We became extremely concerned about the way in which these issues were being handled by the media,” says MediaWise Director Mike Jempson. “Public emotions were being stirred by media coverage, some individuals were taking the law into their own hands, and organisations helping refugees, Roma and Travellers were coming under fire. Truth, fairness and balance was giving way to myth, speculation and bigotry.”

Why was the RAM Project needed?

Even though many of these stories were inaccurate and disparaging, PressWise found it could do very little about them because the body that regulates the newspaper industry in the UK, the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), is reticent about accepting so-called ‘third-party’ complaints, from people objecting on behalf of others. Although there have been encouraging changes at the PCC in recent years, it is still not considered sufficiently robust in its handling of such complaints.

The print and broadcast media are subject, like all citizens, to the terms of the Race Relations Act 1976 and various Public Order Acts. The newspaper industry’s Code of Practice discourages discrimination, and the PCC, which supervises it, periodically reminds the media about its obligations to comply. But Travellers, refugees and Roma have found it impossible to mount successful collective complaints against inaccurate, inflammatory or biased articles. Individuals can only make a case if they have been mentioned specifically. Furthermore, travelling families, asylum-seekers and refugees are rarely aware of what has been written about them in the press, so most of the time they are in no position to raise formal objections with the regulator. Consistently biased and inaccurate coverage of any issue is highly



problematic for a democracy. If information fed to the public by the mass media is untrue or distorted, everyone loses the opportunity to make informed decisions.



It was clear that over time a diet of negative and misleading articles would bolster prejudice among the public and the country's elected representatives. "The symbiotic relationship between politicians and the press can make for a lethal cocktail, especially when the facts are misrepresented or incompletely explained," says Jempson. "Inflammatory claims by politicians make headlines, and sensational news stories prompt outbursts of public animosity which policy-makers react to. Policy can suddenly be driven by irrational, knee-jerk reactions that can seriously hinder – if not actually harm – the prospects for better understanding and a humanitarian response."

There was a very real risk that this coverage could have a major impact on human rights, race relations, the integration of Travellers and refugees within the settled community, and on public policy issues such as housing, education and welfare benefits.

Indeed, policy makers had already begun discriminating against Travellers. The 1994 Criminal Justice Act, for instance, seriously restricted the rights and freedoms that Travellers had enjoyed in England and Wales for hundreds of years, driving many of them off the land when it was enacted. It appeared that hostile media coverage was already feeding directly into policies that undermined basic human rights – and if this could happen to Travellers, there were worrying implications for other minority groups in the UK, such as people seeking asylum from persecution elsewhere.

In November 1997, during the European Year Against Racism, PressWise, supported by the Camden Trust, the Community Media Association, the Commission for Racial Equality, and the National Union of Journalists, organised 'Telling it like it is... Ethnic minorities and the media', a national forum to examine these issues.

Several initiatives were mooted during the event, including two projects that aimed to obtain fair and accurate representation for travelling people and asylum-seekers in the media. Both would seek to encourage high standards of accuracy and social responsibility in media coverage of these groups, encourage dialogue between them and media professionals within Europe, improve media literacy among the organisations working with them, and improve systems of complaint and redress.

The projects had three short-term aims:

- to collect and analyse data from across Europe about the media's treatment of travelling people and refugees;
- to review the systems of media regulation in each country and procedures for redress for inaccurate, inflammatory or otherwise unethical coverage;
- and to develop strategies to improve relations between media professionals and the organisations working with Travellers, refugees and asylum-seekers.

Above: *The Sun*, 16 March 1998
 Right top: *Sunday Times*, 7 June 1998; bottom: *Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1999

Following consultation with the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and discussions with the Refugee Council among others, PressWise approached the European Commission for funds, but there was reticence in Europe about financing projects that might in the end be critical of internal policies of member states. Eventually the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust's Racial Justice Committee agreed to financially support the creation of the Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Media (RAM) Project in September 1999.

What did the Project aim to do?

The RAM Project wanted to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers obtained fair and accurate representation in the media. Its strategy was to build links between refugee organisations and media professionals in both the UK and across Europe, and establish informal networks to share media skills, experiences and information.

Nothing similar was being done by any other organisation at the time, and the RAM Project quickly found there was considerable enthusiasm for its work, particularly in the UK 'dispersal zones' and among organisations working with refugees.

Asylum was already attracting substantial media coverage – though not the almost daily front pages the public would come to see in the years ahead. An early funding proposal described the political context in which RAM was working, and how it would tackle the type of coverage so many people were complaining about:

Political and economic instability has increased the number of people seeking escape from oppression, war and poverty around the world. The security and prosperity of Western Europe makes it an attractive haven, and as the ECRE has pointed out, EU Members States have 'legal and moral obligations to receive and protect asylum-seekers with due legal process and in conditions of dignity'. However these obligations continue to excite controversy and attract media attention throughout Europe.

Hostility over refugees and asylum-seekers in the UK and the rest of Europe has distinctly racist over- and undertones. The situation is being exploited by far right groups, prompting some mainstream politicians to start 'playing the race card'. Unfortunately, although the Home Office has called for regional stakeholder communication strategies to promote integration and racial harmony, no resources have been allocated for this crucial task.

The RAM Project is both addressing this challenge and seeking to ensure that hard-pressed local (and often inexperienced) journalists covering dispersal are provided with reliable information about very complex and sensitive issues by building the capacity of local refugee and support groups.

By creating a communications network between local, national and European sources of information, advice and organisations, the RAM Project hopes to give confidence to those wishing to counter local, political and media hostility, and break down the sense of isolation that refugees share with the others who suffer social exclusion and are competing for the same scarce resources.

“

Truth, fairness
and balance was
giving way to
myth, speculation
and bigotry

Mike Jempson,
MediaWise Director

”

**Asylum tide
costs Britain
£2bn a year**

**Trainloads
of exiles
turned back
at border
Refugees**

Upset by inaccurate or sensational media coverage of refugee and asylum issues?

YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO COMPLAIN

In the first instance you can complain directly to an editor or to the programme producer, preferably as soon after publication or broadcast as possible.

- For advice on writing complaints see www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=512
- Make it clear whether your letter is for publication or not (supply your full name and address – if you do not want them published, explain why).
- Copy your letter to MediaWise and/or the relevant regulatory body.

To make sure your complaint is taken seriously:

1. Find out which is the appropriate body to complain to:

- **Press Complaints Commission:** Local, regional and national papers and magazines and their on-line versions
 - **Ofcom:** Commercial TV and radio programmes
 - **BBC Complaints Unit:** BBC radio and TV programmes and online material
 - **Advertising Standards Authority:** Advertisements
- Addresses can be found at www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=513

2. Link your complaint directly to the regulator's Codes of Practice and guidelines. Copies of these codes can also be viewed via the MediaWise website.

- Clearly identify the item you are complaining about (give the date, publication/channel, title/headline, page/time).
- Itemise the information that is incorrect and, where possible, offer the correct information and any evidence you have to support it.
- Where possible identify the clause/s in Codes of Conduct/Guidelines which you believe the item breaches and explain why.
- If you simply believe that the information is misleading, derogatory or inflammatory, explain why and suggest a more reasonable way of communicating the information.
- Try to avoid using emotive or offensive language; be rational and polite.

If you need help in compiling your complaint contact MediaWise (tel: 0117 9415889). To help us monitor complaints about refugee and asylum issues, please send copies of your complaint and any replies you receive to MediaWise/RAM Project, 38 EBC, Felix Road, Bristol BS5 0HE.



Phase 1: 1999-2000

In August 1999, PressWise formally launched the RAM Project at a seminar in London that brought together 38 agencies involved in refugee and asylum issues. The meeting examined the communication problems that the refugee sector was experiencing, and a questionnaire was distributed to help identify what was needed to overcome these problems.

It identified four areas of work that needed to be addressed if refugees and asylum-seekers were to obtain fair and accurate representation in the media. They were:

- advocacy work on behalf of refugees and asylum-seekers,
- co-ordination of skills, resources and information about and between refugees, asylum-seekers and the organisations representing them,
- well-researched evidence about media representation of them, as a basis for discussions with media professionals, and
- use-of-the-media training.

This set the tone for the next seven months' work. RAM met with as many refugee and media organisations as possible to understand who was willing to get involved, what media advocacy work they were already doing, and what they aimed to achieve. Working locally, nationally and internationally, it organised and attended meetings, presentations and workshops with around 250 groups, including the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, refugee communities, local authorities, trade unions, welfare organisations, campaign groups, newspapers and broadcasters.

With varied levels of organisation and co-ordination among the voluntary sector, and staff to cope with the government's asylum-seeker dispersal programme not always yet in place, RAM worked with whatever structures were beginning to evolve, encouraging the creation of media groups in each region, and the building of better links between them. Work during this period was largely co-ordinated by former *Guardian* journalist Nick Cater.

An important aspect of this early work was trying to widen the 'ownership' of media activities by involving a more diverse range of organisations and individuals than might be expected for a traditional asylum project. The groups targeted included existing minority ethnic communities, race equality agencies, local authorities, trade unions, student groups, the private sector, international aid agencies, community media outlets, and a range of faith institutions.

RAM also sought to encourage academic research into how media coverage affects public perceptions of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Above: *Star*, 12 May 2000;
below (top to bottom): *Mirror*,
9 Feb 2000; *Mail On Sunday*,
7 May 2000; *Independent*,
7 March 2000



Asylum seekers' legal
bill will top £100,000

£10m for councils
inundated with
asylum seekers

Agenda for an early RAM Project Communication Day, organised by PressWise in association with the Midlands Refugee Forum

Managing Media Relations – a one day workshop for West Midlands agencies working with refugees and asylum-seekers

St Martin's in the Bullring, Birmingham
Wednesday 29 March 2000: 9.30am - 4.00pm

09.30 **Coffee / registration**

10.00-10.45 **Session 1: Introducing the day, the participants and the issues**

Outline of the day; introduction from each participant, sharing their experience of media, past training, and need for further skills; mapping the existing and expected refugee situation in the region; media capacity among regional agencies; discussion of media problems and opportunities in the region.

10.45-11.30 **Session 2: Keeping it simple, media basics and essential skills**

Presentations on: what do different media - news agencies, TV, radio and press - want; what and who makes news; media timing; auditing existing resources and identifying story needs; how to talk to journalists without being misrepresented. Questions and discussion, followed by coffee.

11.50-13.00 **Session 3: National, regional and local context**

Presentations on: good news and bad - attitudes to refugees and asylum-seekers shown in a recent MORI poll; assessing the response of the press in the region; responsibilities of the regional consortium in dispersal and media role of local authorities. Questions and discussion, followed by lunch.

13.30-14.30 **Session 4: Creating your communications strategy**

Presentations on: working together in the West Midlands; building media relationships and wider partnerships; pitching stories and proactive work with media; managing key messages; Home Office communications plans; promoting positive attitudes and racial harmony; identifying and empowering community leaders; supporting the integration process; dealing with hostile coverage - media ethics and redress. Questions and discussion, then coffee.

14.50-16.00 **Session 5: Future planning**

Open discussion on: what structures and systems are needed in the West Midlands to meet local needs; regional future media training needs; funding questions; building a national and regional refugee communications network to serve local needs; what's needed in new information channels, handbooks, web sites and email lists; practical planning, roles and responsibilities; any other issues.

16.00 Close **Post-event discussions optional**

In almost every meeting, there was strong demand for RAM to organise media training sessions for both the organisations and asylum-seekers themselves, and to create a new channel of communication disseminating important news and information. In some discussions, there were also calls for campaigning on positive messages, refugees' rights and the perceived inadequacies of both the UK government's arrangements for refugees and asylum-seekers and its new dispersal plans.

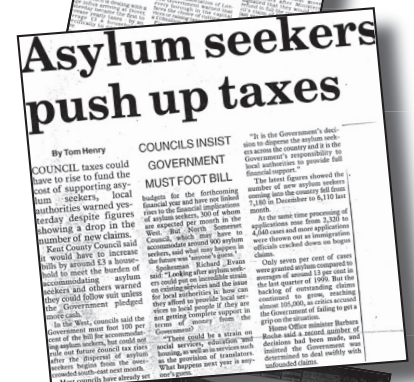
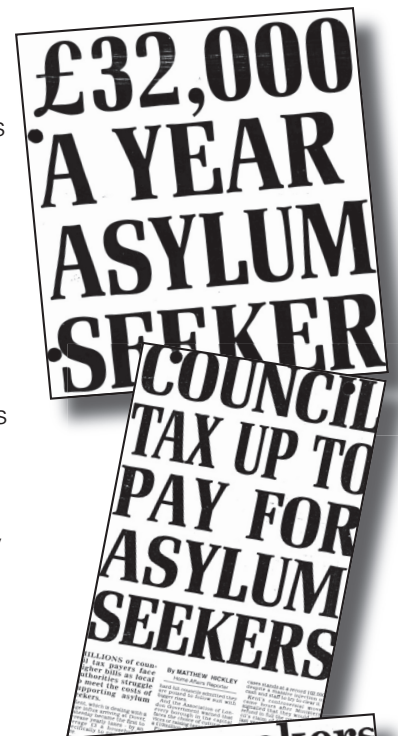
Typical of the events RAM organised was a one day workshop for the West Midlands – a major dispersal cluster area – held on Wednesday 29 March (see left). Hosted in association with the multi-agency Midlands Refugee Forum, it involved 50 participants from the West Midlands, Wales and London, and included presentations on media issues from ten speakers (including the Refugee Council, local journalists and media researchers), discussions on joint action and intensive networking. These early meetings became known as 'Communication Days' which, over the next four years, brought together local activists to share media skills and draw up a strategy for improving local coverage.

Similar early RAM Project activities included:

- A media workshop for 48 participants from Yorkshire and Humberside, which was organised in association with the Refugee Council, Leeds City Council and the Asylum Consortium Team (covering the Yorkshire and Humber Region);
- A seminar organised by the Leeds Asylum-seekers Support Network, with 45 participants, which discussed how to co-ordinate media action and make better links among local agencies;
- In Wales, a meeting of 20 council press officers dealing with asylum issues, and a multi-agency forum of 35 organisations which would eventually become the Refugee Media Group in Wales.

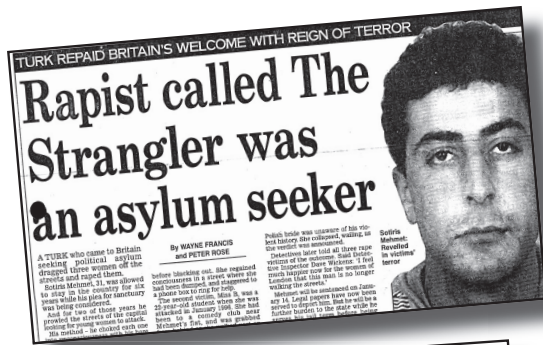
RAM asked participants at these meetings the following questions:

- Which organisations already have staff who work with the media, or are planning to recruit someone? Which agencies have had any media training? Which agencies have a media policy or strategy? Who has budgets for media work or training? Who issues press releases?
- What is the quality, content and tone of media coverage of refugee/asylum-seeker issues in the region? Which are the worst and best media/journalists and why? What are the main problems in terms of the region's media: lack of coverage, hostile coverage, irrelevant coverage? What are the main problems in terms of the region's journalists: ignorance, inexperience, hostility or something else?
- Do agencies want a handbook about dealing with the media – from writing press releases to interview tips? Who should produce it and can local agencies help? Print, net or both? Could a handbook for journalists – contacts, legal definitions, facts on refugees in UK, etc be useful? Who should produce this and can local agencies help?
- Would research to produce evidence of how the media is covering refugees and asylum-seekers in the region be useful? Are any local groups or academics doing research? Has anyone tried to correct stories in the region's media, either directly or via a body like the PCC? If so what was the result? Are there exiled journalists in the



Top to bottom: Daily Mail, 13 March 2000; Daily Mail, 25 Feb 2000; Western Daily Press, 26 Feb 2000; Star, 6 Feb 2000

region, or refugees/asylum-seekers who might wish to write or broadcast; how can they be identified and assisted to have a voice?



- Have the region's agencies organised or supported campaigns or advocacy work involving media, and did they directly involve asylum-seekers/refugees? Which agencies are interested in future campaigns, and on what issues: dispersal, benefits levels, hate crimes or others? Can agencies do this themselves, and if not, who could be approached for help?
- What resources and assistance would help existing or planned media work be more effective? Where can funding be found to support media work by refugee groups in the region? Would groups be interested in joint projects and joint approaches to funders?
- How many local agencies have websites, and who wants to get online? Is the web useful for news, research, recruitment, education? Would web training also be of interest? Are groups using email to send or receive news and information? Would an online and email network linking dispersal agencies be helpful?

The results of the surveys conducted by RAM to assess the communication needs of about 100 organisations working with refugees and asylum-seekers revealed that most had a pressing need for authoritative, printed information about refugees and asylum-seekers that could be distributed to journalists and the public. They also showed that there was often little co-ordination between them over media issues. Meanwhile, the media needed swift access to accurate and authoritative information, and knowledgeable people with personal experience of the asylum system – in short, good stories and case studies.

The Project now had clear priorities – it would need to provide:

- Continued professional support for refugees, asylum-seekers and organisations working with them in the ten dispersal clusters in their dealings with the media, including assistance in establishing communication networks and developing relationships with the media; media advocacy on the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers; and support for their advocacy and campaigning work;
- A supply of accurate and authoritative background information for journalists, including local contacts, especially in the asylum-seeker dispersal areas;
- Support and assistance for exiled journalists and other professionals within refugee communities to act as spokespeople where necessary; basic training in use of the media techniques (for example, writing press releases and handling media interviews); and
- Monitoring of media coverage, co-ordination of related academic research, and provision of support when seeking correction and redress of biased or inaccurate coverage.

By the end of March 2000, some 40 organisations in the UK and Europe had joined the list of groups associated with the RAM Project. The BBC World Service had also commissioned the Project to contribute to a seminar on UK media coverage of asylum-seekers.

Top to bottom: *Daily Mail*, 3 Dec 1999; *The Sun*, 14 March 2000

Living in fear of the media – the UK’s refugee sector

Throughout 1999 and 2000 the RAM Project discovered an enormous number of local organisations – from full-scale support networks to small community agencies – ready and willing to defend the right of asylum-seekers to be in the UK, and eager to implement communications strategies that would advance integration and promote racial harmony. Often isolated, under-resourced and fearful of the media – especially in the wake of aggressive national tabloid coverage – such groups were united in one thing: they lacked the tools to do the job. They wanted information, advice, support and training from credible sources so they could react to unfair negative coverage and actively make the case for asylum-seekers. But no-one was giving it to them.

Larger refugee support groups were also finding it difficult to develop long-term media strategies in the face of daily pressure to provide assistance to client groups, handle media enquiries and to counter misrepresentation. That meant many organisations in the sector were feeling frustrated and angry with both journalists and their regulators. As RAM noted at the time:

One major difficulty is the hostility felt towards media professionals and the failure of media regulation when complaints are made about inaccurate stories or intemperate headlines. But simply responding to ill-informed articles with ill-considered criticism does little to change things. We have to convince people that not all, indeed not many, journalists are hostile to refugees and asylum-seekers, that not all coverage is negative, and encourage more imaginative ways of challenging and changing the public agenda which is dominated by an adversarial approach.

There also appeared to be little co-ordinated networking among refugee support organisations, even though they were committed to similar aims, a problem complicated by competition for limited resources. Participation in the government’s dispersal scheme had helped focus attention on the need for a more co-ordinated and strategic approach to media relations, but in these early months a great deal of RAM’s time was spent simply trying to map the activities of the different NGOs and encourage more effective networking. This slowed down RAM’s efforts to begin working directly on media issues with refugee groups themselves.

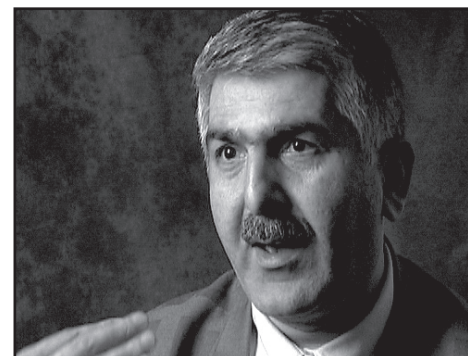
Widespread intolerance – the political context

Several events during this period underlined the political atmosphere RAM was working in. In March, for instance, the government announced that it expected its much-delayed asylum-seeker dispersal programme to be fully operational by Autumn 2000. This highly controversial policy was already facing considerable opposition, widely reported by both the local and national media. Looking ahead, it was clear that negative coverage could intensify further: December 2001 marked the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and was a potential flashpoint for renewed attacks on asylum-seekers in the UK media. A general election was also looming in 2001 and asylum promised to be a major campaigning issue for all parties.

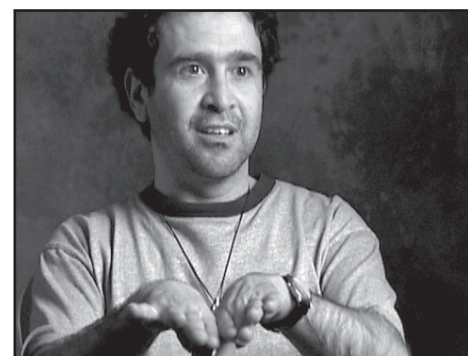
In October 2000, a MORI poll for *Reader’s Digest* revealed just how widespread intolerance of refugees, immigrants and asylum-seekers had become among the British public (www.mori.com/polls/2000/rd-july.shtml). It exposed high levels of ignorance over both numbers and the level of financial assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers. It showed that a



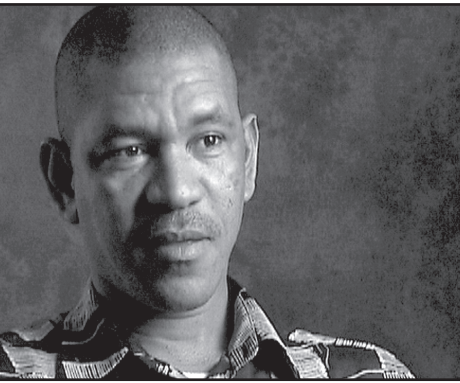
Ugandan journalist Miwanda Bagenda
Pic: Omni Productions



Afghani broadcaster Faqir Mayvand
Pic: Omni Productions



Syrian writer Ghias Aljundi
Pic: Omni Productions



Abu Bakar Shaw, writer from
Sierra Leone
Pic: Omni Productions

massive 80 per cent of British adults believed that refugees came to Britain because they regarded it as a 'soft touch'. Some 66 per cent thought that 'there are too many immigrants in Britain'. Almost two thirds (63 per cent) felt that 'too much is done to help immigrants', and nearly four in ten (37 per cent) believed that those settling in this country 'should not maintain the culture and lifestyle they had at home'.

When the poll results were published, *Reader's Digest's* editor-in-chief Russell Twisk commented: "Immigration issues are certain to be a factor at the forthcoming general election and it is vital that the debate deals in facts not supposition. With over a third of the public believing that racial prejudice will grow worse in the next five years, this situation looks likely to remain a sensitive and complex thread in the fabric of Britain's society."

MediaWise Director Mike Jempson added: "In a democracy it is the job of the media to make sure the public have accurate information on which to base decisions about their lives. The survey shows that the media is not doing its job well. The public does not know the true facts about numbers, costs and benefits, nor the human stories behind the statistics. With a general election looming and the asylum issue high on the political agenda, it is vital for the media to supply accurate information."

Other research suggested why the public was so misinformed. Refugee Council work on the regional press showed that unlike many nationals, regional newspapers had space for positive stories, but there was a lack of intervention by refugee agencies. In broadcasting, anecdotal evidence suggested that local radio phone-in programmes were bringing forward significant levels of unchallenged prejudice, inaccurate information and unchecked racial hostility, while on local television articulate protesters against new arrivals were gaining far more coverage than asylum-seekers keen to avoid attention, or those who would defend them.

So on the eve of the delayed, partial dispersal, and in addition to all the operational problems and confusion fostered by the informal 'privatisation' of dispersal through landlords, it was clear that asylum-seekers faced a hostile prospect: scare stories in the press and unbalanced letters pages, open prejudice on local radio phone-ins, high profile not-in-my-backyard protests featured on TV, organised campaigning by the far right, racial harassment and attacks.

The need for organised action was recognised in a short section of the Home Office's dispersal consultation document:

2.19 Freedom from Fear

2.19.1 Refugees, by definition, have suffered before their flight to safety. It is of primary importance that refugees, their communities and existing local populations can live together comfortably and successfully free from fear and insecurity. Development of partnerships should help communication generally and be linked to programmes to promote positive attitudes towards those in receipt of protection among other communities and groups. The identification of likely community leaders... within refugee groups to help promote self-development could contribute to regional networks and assist communication within refugee communities. A communications strategy should be drawn up by local stakeholder groups to support the integration process and to promote racial harmony.

Despite this, Home Office officials told RAM that any work to develop activities that could have a significant positive impact in this area would be unlikely – at least at this stage – to receive funding from government.

What had been achieved by the end of the year?

By December 2000, RAM's regional, national and international work was in full flow. Over the year, hundreds of grass-roots activists had attended RAM Communication Days in Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool and Manchester. A significant success had been getting the PCC to attend these days and discuss their approach to tackling disparaging coverage. A letter from the Mike Jempson to PCC Chairman Lord Wakeham explained why the regulator's attendance was so important:

As you will be aware there is growing concern that hostile or ill-informed coverage will exacerbate tensions around the country as the planned asylum-seeker dispersal programme gets under way. Much of the more worrying coverage is not 'caught' by the Code of Practice, which may explain why there have been relatively few complaints to the PCC. However, perhaps this is an occasion when it would be helpful for you to remind editors of their responsibility to avoid discrimination and the risk of rabble-rousing.

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Barrow Cadbury Trust are funding the RAM Project which includes a series of Communication Days for refugee organisations and support groups in the dispersal areas, alongside training workshops for press officers. We would be very pleased if the PCC were to be represented at these events, to encourage greater use of the regulatory system to challenge xenophobic coverage. The aim is to generate local networks of people able to deal with media enquiries and challenge inaccuracies and ensure that the voices of refugees are heard.

These events had proved extremely successful and similar meetings were planned for Newcastle and Sheffield in January 2001.

RAM website and monthly *Bulletin*

To meet the need for information, the Project launched its own website (www.ramproject.org.uk) and a monthly electronic newsletter called the *RAM Bulletin* which was emailed to the Project's growing number of contacts. The first issue was sent to more than 400 activists throughout the UK and Europe. In line with the Project's view that refugees and asylum-seekers should speak for themselves in the media, its first editor was Nazand Begikhani, a refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan. A writer and academic researcher specialising in human rights and gender issues, she had been employed as part-time Information Officer for RAM in October.

The Project also assisted a group of exiled journalists who wanted to set up a newspaper, advising them to launch an online publication to showcase their work, which would later become the 'New Vision' website (see page 44).

Creating local networks of media activists

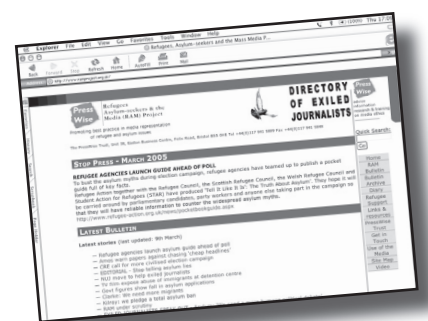
Following Communication Days, media networks had been created in Birmingham, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool and Manchester; activists in Wales were also mirroring the RAM approach. The objectives of these networks were to monitor the media and respond to negative coverage, build

“

Immigration issues are certain to be a factor at the forthcoming General Election and it is vital that the debate deals in facts not supposition.

'Reader's Digest' editor-in-chief
Russell Twisk

”



Above: The RAM Project website

A MORI poll revealed that:

- 80% of British adults believed that refugees came to Britain because they regarded it as 'a soft touch'
- 66% thought that 'there are too many immigrants in Britain'
- 63% felt that 'too much is done to help immigrants'

relationships with journalists to encourage fair and accurate coverage, and co-ordinate media training for all group participants, especially refugees and asylum-seekers.

A RAM worker organised the initial meeting by contacting key people in an area and arranging a venue and chairperson (who often became the co-ordinator for the group). The meeting would be used to explain the role of media networks and provide case histories of what had been achieved in other areas. Groups would then maintain regular contact with the RAM team, and all members would receive electronic copies of the *Bulletin* with its analysis of coverage, tips for dealing with the media and events page.

The network-building had been started by former *Guardian* sub-editor Nick Cater, with freelance journalist Terry Williams taking over in 2000. They provided back-up advice, a support service to regional groups by phone, email and visits, and also maintained contact with NUJ members around the country who had an interest in the issue.

Use-of-the-media training

RAM also provided media training for social workers and community organisations at a conference run by West Sussex Social Services in October, and for police and race equality workers at the Searchlight Educational Trust South-West regional seminar, Communities Combating Hate, in November.

Complaints work

Meanwhile, PressWise continued to provide advice on complaints about media coverage, assisting individuals, organisations and local authorities concerned about the way the dispersal programme had been handled by local press.

Following a meeting in July, the PCC's External Affairs Officer Sue Roberts agreed to monitor complaints with a view to seeing whether the Code of Practice needed revision. The PCC issued several warnings to editors about their responsibilities in covering such topics and 'of the danger that inaccurate or misleading reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility which was not borne out by the facts'.

National and international work

Liaison with refugee sector organisations was conducted for the Project on a part-time basis by consultant Hildegard Dumper, resulting in numerous invitations to speak at meetings. During 2000, RAM contributed to the third UK Roundtable against Racism and Xenophobia, the annual conference of Student Action for Refugees (STAR), a Bodyshop Foundation symposium on corporate involvement in challenging perceptions of refugees and asylum-seekers, and fringe meetings at the Trades Union Congress in Glasgow.

Nick Cater provided a networking service between UK and European projects, contributing to ECRE assemblies in Finland and France, and providing media training for refugee support organisations in Poland. RAM also ran workshops at the 4th European Conference on Integration of Refugees in Greece, contributed to a one-day seminar on media representation of refugees and asylum-seekers organised in Helsinki by the Finnish Refugee Council, and was a partner in the AMARC Open Door project, which encouraged community radio stations throughout Europe to give airtime to refugees.

Phase 2: 2001-2002

By early 2001 the Project was facing a severe funding shortage. Although there was a high level of demand for RAM's services, attracting funds was difficult and PressWise was in effect subsidising the project at a level it simply could not sustain. The Project's aims were slimmed-down slightly and focused on the following areas:

- maintaining and expanding the website and *Bulletin* circulation;
- building on contacts with refugee groups to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers were encouraged to speak for themselves;
- sustaining and developing local media networks as far as resources allowed (the equivalent of one event a month);
- collaborating with other organisations working on projects about media coverage; and
- and using every opportunity to raise the issues.

Bringing journalists and asylum-seekers face to face

The most significant task for RAM in the early part of the year was organising the Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Media Forum – a high-profile event in London that brought together more than 150 refugees, asylum-seekers, organisations working with them, senior media practitioners, policy makers and regulators to discuss the problems of media coverage of refugee issues (see page 38 for further details). It was held on 1 February 2001, the day Parliament debated asylum policy.

The Forum was an opportunity for media professionals, refugees and their support groups to engage in a dialogue about coverage of asylum issues, recognise their different concerns and priorities and consider strategies to ensure fair and accurate reporting which would give the public opportunities to appreciate the human stories of those living in exile. Contributors included leading journalists Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, George Alagiah, Gary Younge, Henry Bonsu and Peter Victor. The event also premiered Channel 4's controversial *Bloody Foreigners* documentary (see page 38).

The opening session was devoted to the stories and views of exiled writers and media professionals – it proved to be extremely powerful and generated positive follow-up in the national media. For example, the BBC's flagship current affairs programme *Newsnight* ran an item on the event, focusing on the launch of the 'New Vision' website. Exiled Bosnian journalist Zrinka Bralo was interviewed by the BBC's Fergal Keane on Radio 4's *Taking A Stand* and Nazand Begikhani featured in a special report in the leading medical journal *The Lancet* about the health of refugees.

Immediately after the Forum, RAM was invited to join the new Positive Images Working Party, set up by the Home Office, to advise on media portrayal of refugee and asylum issues.

The Working Party took up the suggestion that similar events should take place around the country, but it would be another year before the Project obtained sufficient funding to run these events, in conjunction with the Refugee Council.

Spreading the word, building the networks

This kind of networking was proving an extremely effective way of galvanising support, and throughout the year RAM continued to organise workshops, and contributed to public events to encourage debate about



Iraqi Kurdish journalist and academic Nazand Begikhani



Bosnian journalist Zrinka Bralo

RAM Project guide to establishing
a local media network

PressWise RAM Project www.ramproject.org.uk

Setting up a Media Network

Combined action by the many refugee and asylum organisations in the UK can change the tone of media coverage and create positive news. Small groups struggle to get their voices heard – but by working together we can make positive headlines!

Helping set up such Media Networks is a major part of the work carried out by the Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the Mass Media Project (RAM). The work taken on by Media Networks will depend on the number of active numbers and resources. The RAM Project provides a monthly electronic Bulletin that can be downloaded and distributed to help develop local media initiatives.

Here are some ideas:

Size of network

Local media usually forms a cluster of newspaper, radio and TV stations in particular areas. Bring together people from refugee and asylum groups that operate in the area. Some people might prefer to operate within the area of one of the dispersal consortiums. Involve people who **want** to work with the media. There will be enough jobs for everyone – so delegate. Set up an e-mail contact list for your group.

Building contacts

Local journalists will usually do their best to provide a balanced coverage. But they need your help. Journalists depend on the information you can provide about what is happening in the area – and they will want to speak to refugees and asylum seekers. So start work now on identifying and preparing people who are willing to talk to the media. Build up a list of good media contacts. Find out what journalists need and explain how they can help.

Monitoring the media

Check the stories that are being carried in local newspapers and on radio and TV. Get Media Group members to monitor the papers they normally read and the programmes they usually listen to and watch. Put out a swift response to negative reports and praise good coverage. E-mail responses to all group members so all organisations can support this activity.

Training needs

The majority of smaller refugee and asylum organisations are unlikely to have anyone who has been trained in media work. Find out who wants it and identify experienced people who can deliver such training in your area. Contact RAM if you need advice.

Better briefings

Prepare a media pack containing facts and dispelling myths. Include local contacts from asylum and refugee organisations and send to journalists. It may be helpful to send such packs to other community figures such as MPs and councillors. This will help prevent inaccurate statements being repeated in the media and encourage positive comment.

National Union of Journalists

Make contact with NUJ members in your local area. To find out more about the NUJ's 'Refugees are Welcome Here' campaign, call 0207 278 7916, or contact RAM project workers Terry Williams on 0121 588 6341 or Nick Medic on 0117 941 5889. Remember - many journalists are equally concerned about the hostile coverage of asylum seekers.

June 2003

The PressWise Trust

38 Easton Business Centre, Felix Road, Bristol BS5 0HE, UK
tel 0117 941 5889 fax 0117 941 5848 email pw@presswise.org.uk web: www.presswise.org.uk

the role of the media. These included the TUC's annual general meeting, where RAM organised a fringe debate with the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. Staff also spoke at events organised by the ECRE and STAR, and numerous other conferences for social workers, housing officers, and media professionals.

The RAM Project also maintained close contact and worked jointly with the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, the NUJ, the National Assembly Against Racism, the Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, Asylum Rights Campaign (ARC) Media Group, Reporters Sans Frontiers, Refugees Online, other community asylum groups and trades unions.

In Europe, RAM established a communications network linking rights and welfare campaigners, while in the UK it brought together activists through Communication Days and training workshops to establish networks of people willing to promote positive coverage and challenge media bias in 13 dispersal areas – Birmingham, Cardiff, Derby, Doncaster, Glasgow, Hull, Ipswich, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Northampton and Sheffield.

While it proved relatively easy to establish these networks, sustaining them was problematic. Often the activists had conflicting motives and, as circumstances changed, without RAM's intervention the networks risked collapse. The Project could not afford a full-time outreach worker and relied on former journalist Hana Fazal, a regional press officer for the Refugee Council. Many refugee support bodies were stretched to the limit, and the lack of sufficient funding to sustain effective media work was just a symptom of a much wider funding problem.

Indeed, it was a difficulty that PressWise itself was facing – as a tiny, overstretched organisation, it was unable to devote sufficient time and energy to raising the funds needed to provide the services it wanted to offer. It became clear that competition for funding meant those best equipped to fundraise were more likely to obtain support than those with the expertise to provide the most effective services. RAM plans for specialised training schemes for local authority press officers, for instance, did not get off the ground, and this was particularly frustrating since it had so much to offer in this area.

Nevertheless, during 2001 RAM was associated with the production of a report by Oxfam called *Asylum: the truth behind the headlines*, on coverage in Scotland. The media group set up by RAM in Cardiff was involved in the production of a similar report for Wales, *Welcome or over-reaction? Refugees and asylum-seekers in the Welsh Media*; and the Project ran sessions with the World University Service in London. RAM also served on the advisory panel of the Article 19 Refugees and Freedom of Expression Project, successfully arguing that it should include more refugees and media representatives, and that exiled journalists should be employed as part of its research team.

Turning the work into positive media stories

Journalists were beginning to show a great deal of interest in the Project, which gave RAM opportunities to counter myths and prejudices about asylum-seekers. The formation of a media network in Leicester was covered by television and radio and the RAM co-ordinator was interviewed on camera in front of people attending the inaugural meeting. A single press release

Refugee Week 2001 (23 – 29 June)

This annual week focusing on refugee and asylum issues was a particularly intense period of networking. The RAM Project organised and contributed to a variety of events, including:

Sat 23: Media workshop at the Refugee, Racism and Asylum Rights Conference at the University of East London (UEL) Docklands Campus.

Sun 24: Launch of RAM-backed UK Refugee Media Agency (UK-RMA) at the Freedom Forum, Stanhope House, London.

Tues 26: 'Your voice in the media' training day for refugees, organised with Women's Radio Group and Refugees Online. SOAS, University of London. Followed by Press Reception.

Thurs 28: RAM Communication Seminar at Brunswick House, Hull, to address serious problems over media coverage of asylum-seekers in the city. Participants included senior journalists and the PCC.

Thurs 28: RAM contribution to debate on the role of media at the Refugee Women's Association AGM, Islington Town Hall, London.

Fri 29: RAM contribution on dealing with media at 'Asylum-seekers and Mental Health' conference held in Coventry.

The RAM website (www.ramproject.org.uk), which had been overhauled in May, was also relaunched during Refugee Week. It used the latest technology to provide an easy-to-use site from which material could be downloaded to computers with less sophisticated software. The improved accessibility meant that by the end of the year around 1,000 activists across Europe were subscribing to the *Bulletin*.

ACTION PLAN FOR BIRMINGHAM MEDIA SUB GROUP

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify and build relationships with the media in Birmingham and the West Midlands in order to assist journalists covering stories about refugees and asylum-seekers and increase the amount of positive coverage.
2. Bring together refugees, asylum-seekers and their supporters who are willing to talk to journalists and provide a programme of media training.
3. Identify and co-operate with the Refugee Council, Midlands Refugee Council, Refugee Action and other refugee and asylum-seeker groups and supporters involved in media work in the area.
4. Set up an e-group and a website which will hold information for organisations and individuals involved in media and campaign work.

SHORT TERM (up to six months)

- Organise a venue and programme of meetings for the Group.
- Get some short-term funding to provide part-time support for development.
- Contact senior editorial people in Birmingham to promote the Group as a resource to help journalists cover stories about refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Develop guidelines for members tasked with responding to the media on behalf of the Group.
- Organise a database of refugees and asylum-seekers and their supporters willing to talk to journalists and deliver basic media training.

MIDDLE TERM (up to 12 months)

- Organise a series of face-to-face meetings with individuals and groups of journalists covering stories about refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Develop the programme of media training for refugees and asylum-seekers and their supporters who are willing to talk to the media.
- Promote a programme of work with journalists in order to increase positive media coverage and develop and continue media work on and around events such as Celebrating Sanctuary and Refugee Week.
- Negotiate training, placements and work opportunities for exiled journalists living in Birmingham and the West Midlands.
- Provide support for Birmingham and West Midlands campaigns and programmes of public understanding about refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Identify sources of long-term funding to meet the costs of running the Group.

LONG TERM

- Find a permanent base for the Group from which it can continue to work.
- Employ on a permanent contract a part-time or full-time media worker who will co-ordinate the Group, provide the bulk of media training and continue to develop relations with journalists in Birmingham and the West Midlands.
- Provide support for refugee and asylum-seeker communities wanting to set up their own local media i.e. newsletters, websites, e-groups and radio stations.
- Develop a strategy for working with the national media in order to improve coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers and matters impacting on their lives.

announcing the establishment of a similar group in Birmingham resulted in 20 interviews, mainly on radio.

RAM organised a special session at Newsworld 2001, a prestigious annual gathering of news media executives held in Barcelona during November. The panel for 'Exile On Media Street: The Challenge of Reporting Refugees' included Ann MacMillan, London Bureau Chief of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; Joe Ghavimi, a producer and director working in the UK and Iran; Kris Janowski, Head of Media Relations at UNHCR in Austria; and Max Uechtritz, Director of News and Current Affairs at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. PressWise was represented by trainer and BBC World Service producer Arjum Wajid, and the RAM Project by Nick Cater who was able to provide background information and advice to programme-makers.

RAM contributed to several BBC World Service broadcasts on refugees in the UK, including the World Service Trust/UNHCR Right To Refuge series.

One consequence of the Project's endeavours was that the issue of media coverage itself became a matter of public debate. Asylum did not dominate the general election campaign in quite the way that had been anticipated. Sensitive, perhaps, to the fact that its coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers was under scrutiny, the media increasingly recognised the value of concentrating on policy issues and asylum-seekers' own stories.

Building confidence among exiled journalists

Another extremely positive development was RAM's work with exiled journalists – building contacts and confidence, which enabled them to speak out for themselves in a media environment which was both hostile and unfamiliar. The effectiveness of this aspect of the Project was due in no small part to the *Bulletin* and website.

Early in the year the 'New Vision' website was launched by a group of exiled journalists from Ethiopia, with support from RAM and the NUJ, reporting on issues of concern to refugees and asylum-seekers. Following the RAM Forum, a broader group of exiled journalists decided to create a UK-based Refugee Media Agency (UK-RMA) supported by the Project. RAM suggested that coverage in the mainstream media would improve if journalists with direct experience of seeking asylum were working in newsrooms, able to persuade colleagues to take the issue more seriously and recognise the problems faced by media professionals driven into exile for doing their job. UK-RMA and the RAM Project worked together to contact exiled journalists, identify their skills and training needs. A first stage would be to get them published and find them work experience, with a longer term aim of obtaining full-time jobs within the media.

One suggestion was the production of a directory of exiled journalists, which would be accessible to local, regional or national newspaper editors and radio and TV stations.

Why is no-one complaining?

RAM, through PressWise, also continued to provide advice and support to those wishing to make complaints about media coverage although very few people used this service. This may have been a consequence of the lack of time and resources given to building and sustaining the profile of PressWise itself, since its staff were now spending so much time on project and contract

Staffing and finances

Until April 2001 responsibility for the project was shared by a part-time team at a cost to PressWise of approximately £6,000 per month – a level of support that PressWise simply couldn't sustain. If such high levels of activity were to be maintained, PressWise would have to underwrite the RAM Project by some £20,000 by the end of the 2001-2002 financial year.

PressWise's trustees made it clear that in future only fully self-financing project and contract work could be undertaken, and while they regarded the RAM Project as an extremely valuable initiative, it was a significant drain on PressWise's limited human and financial resources.

When Nazand Begikhani left to have her first child in June, the RAM Project was restructured, halving the cost. The emphasis of the Project was also further refined: while maintaining the website and the monthly *Bulletin*, RAM concentrated on promoting its aims through lobbying on behalf of exiled journalists and providing support for the UK-RMA, which might eventually take on some of the activities that the Project had initiated.

The Project's work with the Press Complaints Commission (PCC)

The media in Britain operates under a self-regulatory system, so it was clear that the regulators could be an extremely useful ally in combating unfair and inaccurate coverage of asylum-seekers and refugees. The RAM Project worked hard to ensure they were aware of the problems and encouraged them to take action.

Most of that work centred on the PCC, the self-regulatory body for newspapers and magazines. The PCC agreed to take part in the national and regional forums, so it could discuss the issues with exiled journalists and explain its role.

The Project also supported several exiled journalists to make complaints to the PCC. These included objections to a front-page story about asylum-seekers stealing and eating swans, which proved to have been fabricated by *The Sun* (see page 55), and a *Daily Star* story about asylum-seekers eating donkeys. The PCC rejected a complaint from NUJ members at the *Daily Express*, who expressed concerns about allegedly racist coverage of the expansion of the European Union in May 2004, on the grounds that it was outside its remit. RAM's Communications Officer also complained about a fabricated story in the *Daily Express* – only to be accused by its lawyers of seeking publicity for RAM!

Although none of the complaints were resolved to the satisfaction of the complainants, combined with pressure from refugee support organisations, they undoubtedly put pressure on the PCC to take action. In March 2000 the regulator reminded editors of 'their responsibilities in covering [asylum-seekers and refugees] and of the danger that inaccurate or misleading reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility which is not borne out by the facts'. Then in October 2003, it issued a guidance note to editors (see page 28), reminding them of their responsibilities and warning them against the use of misleading terminology.

(contd...)



work. However, RAM's expertise in this area was often undervalued. For example, the Scottish Refugee Council was reluctant for RAM to attend a local media forum meeting in Glasgow to discuss coverage of the murder of asylum-seeker Firsat Yildiz, and assist in the presentation of a complaint to the PCC. Similarly NUJ members at the *Daily Express* chose to make a collective complaint against their own editors over a series of inflammatory headlines published during August 2001. Both might have benefited from the considerable experience of complaints PressWise had built up over the years.

RAM urged the PCC to consider reissuing its warnings to editors about the nature of coverage of refugees, but this call was overshadowed by the atrocities of 11 September 2001. The subsequent international security crisis both helped the public to understand why people seek refuge outside their own country and heightened the importance of sensitive coverage about refugee issues. A RAM editorial (see page 26) following the attacks was widely reproduced in a variety of activists' journals, including those of the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns and the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

Encouraging dialogue – from Liverpool to London

RAM was now organising regional media forums, bringing together local media practitioners, local elected representatives and regulators with exiled journalists and refugee organisations to discuss strategies to improve coverage. Each had a maximum of 30 attendees. A flexible format was agreed, based on the idea of informal but structured evening meetings attended by up to 35 people under 'Chatham House Rules' (where people are free to speak openly but quotations cannot be attributed to individuals without their consent). These were not intended as media-knocking events but an exchange of views about problems associated with coverage of refugee and asylum issues. Each party was free to comment and criticise any other, but the intention was to forge contacts between media professionals and refugee organisations. Preparations would include identifying, training and supporting refugees and asylum-seekers who were willing to talk to the media. The whole process was independently monitored by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR).

Ambitious plans to hold forums in Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, London (this time for local newspapers, radio and TV), Manchester and Thanet were scaled down, and the Home Office's Positive Images Working Group agreed to fund events in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Margate. A pilot scheme scheduled for Leeds in November had to be cancelled at the last minute after the Refugee Council pulled out and some refugees whose stories were to feature at the event became reluctant to contribute because of worries about negative coverage.

It was rescheduled for February 2002 but again had to be postponed when the government announced that the date chosen would clash with the presentation of a new major policy document on citizenship, asylum and immigration. All the while, RAM received increasing numbers of requests for media training.

Getting asylum-seekers and refugees into the newsroom

By the end of 2002, the UK-RMA had all but collapsed. Keen to salvage

Below: *Daily Mail*, 29 Nov 2002

the networks that had been created, RAM sought other ways to bring exiled journalists together. It negotiated a deal with the NUJ for exiles to join as associate members (until they started working regularly, when they would be eligible for full membership) and mooted the creation of a group of established journalists-in-exile and newcomers within the union to provide support, subsidised training and work opportunities. Some 75 exiled journalists had been identified and were approached on an individual basis for inclusion in the *Directory of Exiled Journalists*. RAM also encouraged exiled journalists to speak at NUJ branch meetings throughout the UK, with a view to stimulating interest and work opportunities at a local level. This work was linked to the production of the *Directory* through which members told their stories, explained their skills, and sought employment or commissions.

In December Nick Medic, an exiled journalist from Serbia, was appointed as Communications Officer for the Project. His main responsibility was developing an exiled journalists' network, and producing the *Directory*, as well as contributing to and developing the *Bulletin* and website. He was also involved in planning a residential weekend that would bring exiled journalists together in Bristol.

By now, the RAM website was getting about 1,200 hits a month, and exiled journalists were being commissioned to guest edit two consecutive editions of the *Bulletin*. This provided them with both experience of working in a UK media context and a platform for their views. By the end of the year, three journalists, from Sierra Leone and the former Yugoslavia, had taken up this opportunity. Gradually this new approach expanded the range and content of the RAM website, so that it became a resource for journalists as well for refugee support groups. The archive of articles on media skills was growing rapidly, and the *Bulletin* expanding to include more analysis of coverage.

RAM Advisory Panel takes charge

In September 2002 a small group of people with professional interests in the Project's work were invited to form an Advisory Panel. Its aims were to monitor progress against RAM's work plan, offer advice on the development or modification of the plan, assist with projects, and work on the preparation of a final report. Among those serving on the Advisory Panel were PressWise Trustee Brian Jones (formerly Deputy Editor of *The Guardian* and Director of The Guardian Foundation); editor of *The Big Issue South West* Tim Lezard (also representing the NUJ); academic Nazand Begikhani (a refugee and former *Bulletin* editor); Vanessa Bucolli (of the Welsh Refugee Media Project), and Robert Egwea (an exiled journalist formerly with the Refugee Arrivals Project). The Panel lost the benefit of academics from Goldsmiths' College when the Home Office abruptly cancelled a major research project into public perceptions of refugees and asylum-seekers.

The Panel advised on strategic development – for instance, it recommended appointing an exiled journalist as a full-time addition to the Project team. All members received copies of RAM team minutes, had access to all RAM-organised events (and attended at least one each) and had their own e-group so they could communicate easily. Although it has proved difficult for all members to attend regularly, the Panel meets at least three times

(contd...)

The guidance note was a major step forward, but the RAM Project then carefully monitored press coverage to assess its effectiveness, and published regular news articles in the *Bulletin* about its findings. In May, for example, the *Bulletin* reported that newspapers and magazines were breaching the guidelines on average once a day.

Shortly before this report went to press, the Home Office agreed to fund a project to monitor the impact and adequacy of the PCC guidance. The study will be conducted by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR), the RAM Project and the Refugee Council. Local, regional, and national newspapers will be monitored over three months, highlighting unbalanced, inaccurate, and hostile reporting that gives cause for concern.

The project will also record examples of accurate and balanced reporting which promote information-based debate and provide a basis for the public to decide for themselves. Exiled journalists will investigate press stories that appear to breach the PCC guidance. The study will make recommendations to the PCC and others about the role of the media in promoting accurate and balanced images of refugees and asylum-seekers.

The RAM Project's experiences with the PCC demonstrate that regulators will eventually respond to pressure – but any action must be carefully monitored to assess its effectiveness.



Mike Jempson's call to challenge racist and inflammatory reporting after 11 Sept 2001 was reproduced widely

KEEP CALM – AND COMPLAIN!

By Mike Jempson

The emotional turmoil generated by the atrocity in New York on 11 September has left people feeling vulnerable and unsure.

In the main the print and broadcast media were exemplary in their coverage over the first few days after the attack. But since then the pundits have been in overdrive. A welter of confusing analysis and bellicose rhetoric has fuelled fear and anxiety, especially among children who cannot avoid the dreadful imagery that has accompanied so much of recent coverage. It should hardly come as a surprise that some bigots have embarked upon their own crusades against perceived 'enemies'.

Feelings whipped up against refugees and asylum-seekers over the last few years have already led to murder, arson and assaults. The massacre in America, which affected citizens from 80 countries, threatens to further isolate and marginalise those who have sought sanctuary in Britain. British Muslims, and especially Afghanis and Pakistanis, have borne the brunt of the backlash with attacks on mosques, physical assaults and verbal abuse.

By Tuesday 18 September the 'Mirror' was urging 'STOP THIS MADNESS' as reports

of random attacks increased. And the Commission for Racial Equality issued its own warning to the press: "Journalists and editors must balance news value with the need to portray all communities in the UK fairly and avoid coverage which is based on racial stereotypes or unfounded misconceptions."

The 'Daily Telegraph' and the 'London Evening Standard' were among papers reported to the Press Complaints Commission in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist outrage. Fifteen complaints were received that week. Government ministers have begun to show a lead by seeking to distinguish between Islam and suspected terrorists, but Tony Blair's 'Breakfast with Frost' ('Sun' 30 Sept) statement that the Government plans to examine asylum laws to "prevent possible abuse by terrorists" will heighten hostility towards refugees and asylum-seekers.

As the 'phoney war' continues, time and space is being filled with speculation about Bin Laden supporters 'in our midst', chemical and biological warfare, and the consequences of military strategies. Afghan refugees are reported to be quitting the Red Cross Centre at Sangatte near Calais because of hostility from other inmates.

And now a planned media appeal for funds to help with the refugee crisis spawned by threats of military action against Afghanistan may be put on ice for fear that the public will not respond!

All the more reason for the media to watch carefully the language and the messages they publish - and for members of the public to complain if they think coverage is overstepping the mark and inflaming public feeling. There is a natural tendency to remain silent rather than criticise when public feelings are inflamed by images of death and destruction, especially when a press-generated furore forced the BBC to apologise for allowing a live audience including British Muslims to express their views openly.

But silence gives succour to those elements wishing to stoke up race hatred.

PressWise and the RAM Project urges anyone who considers that newspaper stories, or radio and TV broadcasts might encourage attacks on refugees, asylum-seekers, British Muslims or anyone else to **MAKE AN IMMEDIATE COMPLAINT.**

Contact numbers for all the media regulators can be found on our website: www.presswise.org.uk.

Phase 3: 2003-5

By 2003, the RAM Project had a high media profile (see 'RAM Project in the media' panel, page 29). Importantly, this wasn't the result of seeking media attention for its own sake, but working effectively with exiled journalists. RAM was offering reporters content-rich material that was both topical and easy to turn into stories, such as the seminar for exiled journalists (see below), the regional media forums and ICAR's reports on them, and the *Directory*, which was published in May.

From January to December 2003, RAM activities were publicised in sixteen outlets, including *The Guardian*, Bristol's *Venue* magazine, the *Bristol Evening Post*, *In Exile*, *Professional Social Work* – and a number of newsletters and bulletins in the UK and abroad.

RAM's 'Working in the UK Media' seminar (see page 48) in March 2003 brought together 35 exiled journalists for a weekend to discuss their experiences and learn more about how the UK media operates. It put them in touch with leading UK journalists, media union officers and other exiles who had started their own media projects in the UK. The exchange of opinions and debate over three days stimulated many to start thinking of the UK media as a source of potential employment; meanwhile the UK journalists recognised a breadth of largely untapped journalistic talent in the refugee community – and that exiled journalists could make a valuable contribution to newsrooms in this country.

Omni Productions, an independent film production company, shot over 18 hours of footage at the weekend, including in-depth interviews with participants, which was edited down to a 15-minute film called *On the Receiving End: Exiled journalists speak out*. It features nine journalists talking about their experiences of seeking exile in the UK and their reaction to media coverage of asylum issues.

The RAM Project had hoped to make the film as a joint venture with Article 19, but when funding from Channel 4 was not forthcoming PressWise staff decided to forgo a month's wages so that filming could go ahead. The powerful film that resulted was premiered at a workshop in Slovenia and its first UK screening was at Article 19's 'Refugees & Media Research' conference in May 2003. It has since been used at conferences and seminars throughout the UK and Europe to stimulate debate and discussion. It was also used for training by the BBC editorial policy unit and Swedish Red Cross, nominated for a prize at a Ukrainian human rights festival, and shown at a special screening at the Frontline Club in London for foreign correspondents and exiled journalists. The cost of the film was subsequently covered by a Home Office grant which enabled RAM to distribute over 200 free copies.

At the Article 19 conference, RAM also exposed BBC plans to invite audiences to vote on whether individual asylum-seekers should remain in the UK, which resulted in a front-page story in *The Guardian* (see cutting, page 29). The controversy over the programme *You the Judge* forced the BBC to reconsider its format.

Having an impact...

As a result of reading the *Directory*, BBC Radio 5 Live producer Randip Panesar persuaded the Corporation to offer placements to members of



Top to bottom: *Daily Express*, 19 Feb 2003; *Daily Mail*, 19 Jan 2003; *The Sun*, 8 May 2003

The guidance note issued by the
Press Complaints Commission

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

23 OCTOBER 2003



Over the past few years, the Commission has received increasing numbers of complaints – principally concerning discrimination – about the coverage of issues relating to refugees and asylum-seekers.

The clear majority of complaints – including those stemming from partisan comment and campaigning – raise no breach of the Code of Practice.

However, one discrete group of complaints – which fall under the broad banner of Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Code – has led to a number of breaches, and the Commission thought it useful to draw this issue to the attention of editors.

Those breaches of the Code that have occurred – in a similar manner to the issue of the reporting of mental health, about which the PCC issued guidance in 1998 – appear largely to have arisen from misunderstandings about terminology.

The Commission is concerned that editors should ensure that their journalists covering these issues are mindful of the problems that can occur and take care to avoid misleading or distorted terminology. By way of example, as an “asylum-seeker” is someone currently seeking refugee status or humanitarian protection, there can be no such thing in law as an “illegal asylum-seeker”. A “refugee” is someone who has fled their country in fear of their life, and may have been granted asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention or someone who otherwise qualifies for Humanitarian Protection, Discretionary Leave or has been granted Exceptional Leave to Remain in the country. An asylum-seeker can only become an “illegal immigrant” if he or she remains in the UK after having failed to respond to a removal notice.

Those groups set up to support and advocate on behalf of refugees and asylum-seekers can provide further clarification to journalists if required.

Editors are, of course, already aware that pejorative or irrelevant reference to a person’s race, religion, or nationality is already prohibited under Clause 13 (Discrimination) of the Code. Similarly, the Commission – in previous adjudications under Clause 1 (Accuracy) of the Code – has underlined the danger that inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts.

Below: *Guardian*, 31 May 2003

the network in BBC newsrooms for a week in February 2004. The scheme allowed 13 exiled journalists the opportunity to shadow reporters and producers, examine UK radio broadcast techniques, and meet programme editors. Some of those who took part were later offered work at the BBC – and it is hoped the scheme will be repeated in 2005.

RAM's work with ICAR was particularly fruitful in 2003. Recommendations from its report *The Challenge of Reporting Refugees and Asylum* on RAM's regional forums led to a variety of initiatives. As a result of concerted pressure, the PCC was finally persuaded to issue a Guidance Note to editors in October 2003 (see left). The guidance explained the meanings of the terms 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee' and explained why the phrase 'illegal asylum-seeker' is inaccurate. The confusion between asylum and immigration was also addressed, explaining why it is not appropriate to describe people as 'illegal immigrants'. These guidelines were the result of consistent pressure on the watchdog from different sources – and proved that if enough people complain and criticise from different directions, major changes can occur.

The UNHCR commissioned RAM to produce guidelines for journalists (see page 31). After extensive consultation a leaflet was produced jointly with the NUJ Ethics Council and circulated widely. An article about it in *The Guardian* resulted in hundreds of requests for copies; several newspapers also wrote to thank the Project for producing it. ICAR also asked RAM to contribute to its *Media Image, Community Impact* project commissioned by the Mayor of London, by conducting interviews with local newspaper editors. The study revealed the impact that unfair and unbalanced coverage of asylum-seekers and refugees can have on local communities.

European action against inaccurate reporting

RAM organised the UK's contribution to the first-ever European-wide examination of media coverage of minorities, by focusing on refugee and asylum issues. Volunteer monitors read local and national newspapers, and filled in questionnaires about each article on refugees or asylum-seekers (the survey was limited to the press, though there are plans to extend it to television and radio in future). The volunteers also measured the length of articles and headlines and size of photographs, looked out for a list of key words ('bogus', 'criminal' and 'scrounger', for example), and made an overall judgement about the tone of each story. A report on the results from across Europe was launched during a Week of Action in March 2004.

'A Sense of Place'

PressWise also organised a special media day for the British Council's international week-long conference 'A Sense of Place' in Cardiff during November 2003. The day included debates and workshops designed to promote better public understanding of why people flee their homes in search of safety, and the benefits they bring to host countries. Speakers included media representatives from France, Holland, Macedonia, Serbia, Sweden, the *Daily Mail*, *The Guardian*, Reuters and UNHCR, as well as a panel of exiled journalists from Liberia, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zimbabwe and contributions from media academics.

In December 2003, RAM held a study weekend for guest editors of the *Bulletin* and PressWise staff on how the publication is prepared and how it could be improved.

RAM Project in the media

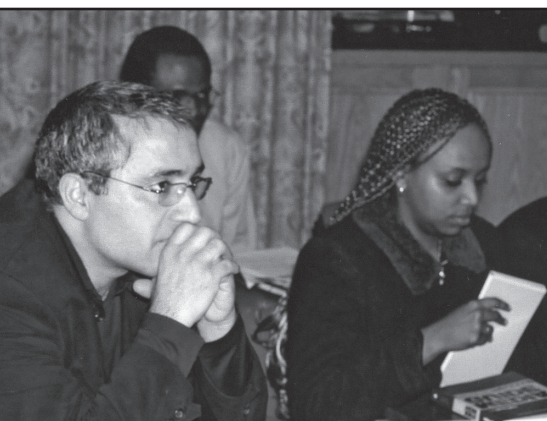
From June to November 2003, following the publication of the *Directory*, RAM monitored the amount of media interest it was generating. Coverage included:

- Gordon Doh Fondo, cover photo, *Professional Social Work*, June
- Meconen Mulgeta, 'Angela's Adopted Family', *Big Issue South West*, June 2 – 8
- Journalism.co.uk, 'Online Aid for Refugee Journalists', www.journalism.co.uk/news/story686.html, July 17
- NUJ magazine *The Journalist*, article on Besim Gerguri, July
- Nicolette Muzazi, BBC Merseyside Radio, July 23 – the BBC's Asylum Day
- Nick Medic and Nela Milic, BBC London, BBC's Asylum Day
- Mike Jempson, BBC Digital, BBC's Asylum Day
- Mike Jempson, Radio 5 Live, debate with Paul Woolwich, BBC executive responsible for *You the Judge*, BBC's Asylum Day
- Maxson Kpakio, BBC Radio North of England and BBC Radio Wales, debate with Tory MP David Davis, BBC's Asylum Day
- David Aaronovitch, *The Guardian*, article on David Coleman of MigrationWatch and eugenics (as a direct result of story in *RAM Bulletin*), August 5
- NUJ magazine *The Journalist*, on the *Directory Of Exiled Journalists*, August
- *Press Gazette*, article on *Directory*, August 8





RAM Project staff were invited to speak at a number of events in this period, including: Birmingham Refugee Children & Youth New Hope Partnership's 'Protect The Refugee Child' conference; the University of Newcastle's Roma and Asylum Conference; an Amnesty International Middle East/North Africa Conference; the commemoration of *Kristallnacht* by the Jewish Socialists' Group, and STAR local meetings. A 'mythbusting' event at Sandwell Council (on which RAM national co-ordinator Terry Williams serves as a councillor) in the Midlands was particularly well received.



Terry Williams also conducted a survey of the training needs of the nine local networks (Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, Kent, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle) and devised a training programme to start in early 2004. Central to the plan was a mentoring scheme for exiled journalists so that they could in turn train members of local groups and refugee community organisations. It was designed to help them develop their own training skills and pass on their knowledge of the media. It would also fulfil the Project's aim of opening up new job opportunities for exiled journalists.

A National Conference of Regional Networks was held in May 2004, bringing together all of the groups to exchange information on positive initiatives and share ideas for the future. Contributors came from across Britain – from Glasgow to Dover – and compared notes on how they had tried to work with journalists from the local and national media. RAM speakers explained what support the Project could offer and emphasised that concerted local action was the most effective way of ensuring that media coverage of asylum-seekers and refugees was fair and balanced.

Above: David Aaronovitch at the 'Working in the UK Media' seminar; two attendees.
Below: Coverage improves – *Bristol Evening Post*, 24 May 2003; *Daily Mirror*, 3 March 2003.
Right: RAM's guidelines for journalists

Funding was obtained from Comic Relief to continue the development of Regional Networks and provide appropriate use-of-the-media training. The Networks began to exchange more information about their techniques for improving media coverage.

The experience gained over the last five years increased demand for RAM to contribute to academic research, public events and conferences including, during this period, the National Refugee Integration Conference in London, and United Nations Association Conference in Croydon.



PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING

Take care when publishing images that may identify individuals. Make sure captions are accurate. If in doubt about the use of images – talk to the people being portrayed.

- People fleeing persecution leave families behind who may face retribution from repressive regimes if relatives in the UK are identified.
- Exiled political activists from other countries may risk death threats or attacks by agents of the regime they opposed, or by regime loyalists in the UK.
- Normal considerations of respect for personal privacy apply to asylum-seekers and refugees, particularly when identifying children.
- Giving prominence simply because of their asylum or refugee status could lead to unwarranted discrimination and hostility.

Reporting third party comment

To avoid 'misleading or distorted reporting', care should be taken when quoting third party comments – and the prominence given to them. Publishing unsubstantiated claims or comments is poor journalistic practice. In the case of asylum issues, publishing hostile allegations can generate 'fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts'.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Article 19 www.article19.org
What's the story? Analysis of media coverage and contacts available free on CD Rom from Article 19
- BBC has produced a useful 'jargon-buster' at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3380397.stm>
- Diversity On-line www.diversity-online.org/
- Forced Migration Online (worldwide database) www.forcedmigration.org
- Her Majesty's Stationery Office (All the latest laws) www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk
- Migration Information Source (international data and comment) www.immigrationinformation.org
- National Statistics Office UK www.statistics.gov.uk Tel: 0845 601 3034
- Home Office www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1
- Refugees, Asylum-seekers & Media Project www.ramproject.org.uk (with Directory of Exiled Journalists)
- The Challenge of Reporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers available from ICAR & PressWise RAM Project
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers – A guide for journalists in Scotland Useful material applicable UK-wide compiled by NUJ and Amnesty International Scotland

CONTACTS FOR FACTS AND QUOTES

(Some will have Scottish, Welsh, NI and regional offices)

- Amnesty International www.amnesty.org
Tel: 020 7413 5806/5566/5977 Out of hours: 07721 398984
- Asylum Aid www.asylumaid.org.uk Tel: 020 7377 5123
- Children's Society www.childrens-society.org.uk/newindex.html
Tel: 020 7841 4422
- Commission for Racial Equality www.cre.gov.uk
Tel: 0207 939 0064/0072/0106 Out of hours: 07876 453779.
- Department of Health www.doh.gov.uk/asylumseekers/ Tel: 0113 254 6605
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) www.ecre.org (Europe-wide database) Tel: 0207 377 7556
- Home Office www.homeoffice.gov.uk Press Office: 020 7273 4545
- Immigration Advisory Service www.iasuk.org/ Tel: 0207 357 7511
- Immigration Law Practitioners Association www.ilpa.org.uk/ Tel: 020 7251 8384
- Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees www.icar.org.uk/ 'Ask ICAR' service: 020 7848 2103
- Institute of Race Relations www.irr.org.uk/resources/refugee.htm
Tel: 020 7837 0041
- Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants www.jcwi.org.uk/ Tel: 020 7251 8708
- Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture www.torturecare.org.uk/index.htm Tel: 020 7813 3445
- Migrant Helpline www.migranthelpline.org.uk Tel: 01304 218754/203977
- National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) www.ncadc.org.uk/ Tel: 0121 554 6947
- National Asylum Support Service (NASS) www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?PageId=BQ Tel: 020 7633 0304
- Refugee Action www.refugee-action.org.uk
Tel: 0161 233 1956/020 7654 7714
- Refugee Arrivals Project www.refugee-arrivals.org.uk
Tel: 0208 607 6942/6888
- Refugee Council www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
London tel: 020 7820 3057/840 4404
Out of hours: 0870 055 5500 pager 865169
Scotland: 0141 223 2927/07977 571193
- Refugee Studies Centre www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/ Tel: 01865 270722
- Refugee Women's Association www.refugeewomen.org Tel: 0207 923 2412
- Save the Children www.savethechildren.org.uk Tel: 020 7716 2280
- Student Action for Refugees (STAR) www.star.network.org.uk
Tel: 020 7840 4443
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees: www.unhcr.ch
UK Press Office: 020 7932 1020/07625 131331



REPORTING ASYLUM AND REFUGEE ISSUES

a resource by and for journalists



Exiled Journalists Network
www.ramproject.org.uk
0117 941 5889



Media Wise
www.mediawise.org.uk
0117 941 5889



NUJ
NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS
www.nuj.org.uk
020 7278 7916



UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
www.unhcr.ch
020 7932 1020

Asylum and immigration issues are controversial areas of public policy and debate. However, public opinion and policy formation are not well served when media coverage is inaccurate, misleading or unfair.

This leaflet is designed to be of practical assistance to journalists seeking to report on the issues accurately and fairly.



Asylum-seekers and refugees who have already fled conflict and persecution, and communities identified with them,

have been subjected to xenophobic attacks in the UK. Alarmist media coverage has been blamed for encouraging or validating such attacks.

In October 2003 the Press Complaints Commission issued a guidance note to editors warning of "the danger that inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts" – and could be in breach of Clause 1 of the industry Code of Practice.

Produced by MediaWise (The PressWise Trust) for the NUJ Ethics Council, with support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Cover picture: Howard Davies/Exile Images • picture above: Bettin Gergin
Design: penicill@rediffon.com

TERMINOLOGY

Journalism uses shortcuts to convey information. However, it helps to be precise and consistent when using terms with legal definitions.

Who is an asylum-seeker?

Anyone who has applied for asylum against persecution under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, and is waiting for a decision.

Who is a refugee?

Anyone who has been granted asylum under the UN Convention, to which the UK is a signatory along with 144 other countries. The precise legal definition in Article 1 of the Convention refers to a 'refugee' as a person who: 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.'

What about those fleeing general conflict?

People who do not qualify for refugee status may be granted humanitarian protection allowing them 'leave to remain' in the UK for a defined or indefinite period, if they cannot safely return to their home country. UNHCR describes these people as 'refugees'.

Can those not granted refugee status or temporary leave to remain be sent back home?

YES – although their country of origin might refuse to accept returnees or return may not be possible. Such individuals will generally not be eligible to receive UK benefits or support, nor are they legally entitled to work. In some cases they will be held in detention.

Who is an 'illegal asylum-seeker'?

NO-ONE. This term is always incorrect. It cannot be illegal to seek asylum since everyone has the fundamental human right to request asylum under international law.

The term 'bogus asylum-seeker' is also inaccurate and misleading as it pre-judges the outcome of an asylum application – rather like describing a defendant as entering a 'bogus plea of innocence' during a trial.

REPORTING THE CAUSE OF ASYLUM SEEKING

Relatively little coverage is given to the human rights abuses and conflicts that force people to flee their homes, yet providing this global context would improve the quality of debate around asylum issues. Historical, cultural and family links with the UK and a desire for safety under the rule of law may be more significant than so-called 'pull factors' like access to benefits.

At least 25% of all those granted asylum in the UK are women, and many unaccompanied minors are sent on hazardous journeys to find safety in the UK. A wealth of background information is available on the Internet, and balance can be achieved by referring to a variety of sources. (see Contacts panel)

Interviewing refugees and asylum-seekers

Asylum-seekers and refugees have a right to be heard, and many have amazing stories to tell. However fear of reprisals 'back home', stereotyping, negative coverage and public hostility in the UK make many reluctant to talk to journalists.

When seeking interviews:

- be clear about your purpose;

Are there 'failed asylum-seekers'?

YES. The term covers individuals who have exhausted all their legal avenues in seeking asylum. That does not necessarily mean their claim is 'bogus'; it means they have failed to meet the UK's current criteria, which change from time to time. Their lives may still be at risk, and they may qualify to remain in the UK on humanitarian grounds.

Are 'asylum-seekers' the same as 'illegal immigrants'?

NO. Asylum-seekers have registered with the Home Office and are allowed to remain in the UK while their claim is being considered.

The Convention acknowledges that someone fleeing persecution may enter a country by irregular means (and often without any documents) in order to claim asylum. The term 'illegal immigrants' could apply to people who can be shown to have:

- entered the country illegally, without permission from an Immigration Officer, who then continue to reside in the UK without contacting the authorities or making an asylum application; OR
- entered the country legally, with all the necessary documents, but then disregard limits placed on the length of stay set on their visa ('overstayers'); OR
- refused to co-operate with Home Office attempts to remove them for whatever reason.

What do you call someone who tries to enter the UK by unlawful means?

Some of those smuggled into the UK (hidden in lorries, etc) will be seeking asylum, but it is inaccurate to categorise them all as 'asylum-seekers' since some may have no intention to seek asylum. The government refers to these as 'clandestines' although 'irregular migrants' might be a more accurate and less confusing term.

People-smugglers are committing a crime but their clientele may not be.

Who are 'economic migrants'?

People who leave their home country to seek work and opportunities unavailable there. The term could be applied to all those who obtain work permits from the government to fill labour shortages in the UK. UNHCR describes a 'migrant' as someone who makes a conscious, voluntary choice to leave their country of origin. When they want to, they can return home in safety.

- be sensitive to requests for anonymity;
- inform yourself about countries of origin.

Avoid stereotyping

Material that relies upon stereotypes for its impact (images implying threat and illegality, for example groups of masked or hooded young men) can mislead and distort perceptions, especially where they do not relate to the facts of a story. Each person's story is different.

Know your experts

When relying on experts and specialist organisations, it helps to check their details to provide context for the public – most will have websites that provide some background. Avoid relying on one source, especially when issues are contentious. There is a great variety to choose from.

Getting facts and figures right

A failure to distinguish between fact and conjecture can have alarming consequences, as can distortion of facts and figures. It is always worth checking and challenging figures quoted by politicians or others with a vested interest. To enhance credibility, indicate the provenance of statistics. (See panels)

Agenda for 'A Sense of Place' seminar

A SENSE OF PLACE

24-27 November 2003
The Old Library, The Hayes, Cardiff, Wales

09.30-11.00: Do the mass media set the pace or follow the pack?

CHAIR: **Gary Younge**, New York columnist, *The Guardian*

PANEL: **Asmet Elezovski**, Roma Media, Macedonia

Stephen Jukes, Former Global Head of News, Reuters news agency

Simon Taylor, Head of UK Communications, UN High Commission for Refugees

John Torode, Freelance political commentator to the *Daily Mail*

11.30-12.45: SCREENING AND DISCUSSION: *On the Receiving End*

CHAIR: **Mike Jempson**, Director, The PressWise Trust

PANEL: **Ghias Aljundi** (Syria), **Miwanda Bagenda** (Uganda), **Max Kpakio** (Liberia), **Nick Medic** (Serbia),

Sandra Nyaira (Zimbabwe), **Gordon Doh Fondo** (Cameroon), **Pearl Thevanayagam** (Sri Lanka)

14.00-15.30: WORKSHOPS

A. Asylum & Media Literacy (Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies)

1. The Writing Wales Differently Project: lessons about media literacy and asylum.

Prof. Terry Threadgold & Dr. John Jewell with Martin Mondeh

2. Reflecting on Media Literacy: working with asylum seekers

Dr Gill Branston with Kebebus Mulugeta & Debeber Legesse (Cardiff Academic Asylum Seekers Group).

B. Gender, Asylum and the Media (Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies)

Vanessa Bucolli (Co-ordinator, Refugee Media Group) with **Zrinka Bralo & Selina Mayo**

C. Popular Culture

Don Flynn (Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants) & **Terence Wright** (University of Ulster)

D. Initiatives for change

Nick Medic Refugees, Asylum-seekers & the Media (RAM) Project (UK)

Milica Pesic Media Diversity Institute (Balkans/Caucasus)

Ulka Holago & Josef el Mahdi Quick Response (Sweden)

Brankica Petkovic Peace Institute (Slovenia)

Faqir Mayvand, Jesus Panadero-Huerta & Wendwosen Abebe Refugee TV (UK)

E. Young Voices

'There must be an easier way': children using video to represent their migration experiences

Rasa Sekulovic (Save the Children, Serbia) with **Liesbeth de Block** (Institute of Education Centre

for the Study of Children), **Simon Aeppli** (WAC Performing Arts & Media College)

Maria Leonida (Documentary Director, Greece) & **Nadina Christopoulou**

(CHICAM - Greek Refugee Council, Institute of Education)

F. Inside Out (drama)

Stella Barnes (GYPT) with **Adam Annand, Alison Hale, John Morales,**

Patrick Nelson & John Wood (Writer and Director, Inside Out)

G. Way from Home (online project about Cardiff)

16.00-17.00: PANEL DISCUSSION: Where do we go from here? Messages for the media

CHAIR: **Richard Tait**, Professor of Journalism, Cardiff, former head of news ITN

PANEL: **Jeremy Dear**, General Secretary, National Union of Journalists (UK)

Ed Klute, European Monitoring project/Online-More Colour in the Media (Holland)

Bernard Margueritte, Poland correspondent, *Le Monde*

Kirsteen Tait, Director, Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (UK)

The way ahead...

The RAM Project's strategy for 2005-2006 is to establish the Exiled Journalists' Network (EJN) as an independent, registered charity that can develop initiatives such as the *Bulletin*, website and local media networks. This programme represents the culmination of the RAM Project.

Developing the Exiled Journalists Network

Central to the RAM Project is the belief that the best people to speak for refugees and asylum-seekers are those people who have personal experience of the system. Some of the Project's objectives have been to identify exiled journalists and assist them to:

- contribute their skills to refugee community organisations,
- obtain training and re-skilling, and
- find work in the UK media.

This has resulted in the formation of the EJN, a group of over 150 asylum-seekers and refugees from around the world, who have come to the UK after facing persecution in their home countries because of their media work. With the help of the RAM Project they have become members of the National Union of Journalists which, in consultation with MediaWise, is now developing services to meet their needs.

The EJN has evolved from a loose association to a powerful network, whose members now play an active role within the RAM Project and the NUJ, and have begun to operate as advocates for asylum-seekers and refugees, and as contributors to the UK media. An EJN Steering Group is working on the legal structure of the organisation and funding applications to establish it as an independent charity, which will take forward the groundbreaking work of the RAM Project. Before the end of 2005 it is intended that the EJN will be organised and controlled by its own members.

For most of 2005 the EJN will run alongside RAM, so that skills can be transferred and the RAM Project website, *Bulletin* and networks can be handed over to it. RAM support will include sponsoring regular meetings of the Steering Group, consulting EJN members, developing partnership programmes and providing assistance with fundraising.

The EJN Steering Group agenda for the year includes:

- Identifying and contacting potential members, patrons and partners,
- Completion of the Constitution and standing orders,
- Organising an assembly of EJN members to adopt the Constitution and elect officers,
- Registering EJN with the Charity Commission,
- Developing policies and procedures for services, including advice and employment strategies, and
- Providing speakers for public events and media.

Regional Media Networks

Work will continue on the development and maintenance of voluntary regional media networks, composed of concerned citizens keen to improve media representation of refugees and asylum-seekers. It is imperative to ensure that existing groups can sustain themselves, with help provided by RAM/EJN on use-of-the-media training and advice on local fundraising.

Top to bottom: *Daily Express*, 24 Jan 2005; *Western Daily Press*, 16 Feb 2005; *Daily Express*, 8 Feb 2005



Bulletin and website

Funding for the *Bulletin* and website runs out in the summer of 2005. Produced monthly since October 2000, and edited by exiled journalists, the *Bulletin* now has 1,800 subscribers in the UK and Europe; the website, meanwhile, receives an average of 4,000 visitors a month. Together they underpin the Project's outreach activities.

In the coming months, the website will be changed to reflect the EJN's agenda, and funding will be sought for a relaunch to broaden its scope. The website will be developed to include profiles of exiled journalists' work, articles about the state of the media in members' countries of origin, and information about press freedom and safety issues. Work has already

started on a redesign. The new site and *Bulletin* will continue to feature news stories, media analysis, the 'Communicator' use-of-the-media guide, and a 'Peg Board' of upcoming events.

Training

MediaWise trainers and EJN members will continue to provide use-of-the-media training for community groups and refugee community organisations to improve media coverage of refugee and asylum issues.

The RAM Project has formed a partnership with Lincoln University School of Journalism to run a two-day training programme for 15 exiled journalists (10-11 May). The residential course will assess members' training needs and introduce them to UK print and broadcasting techniques. This is a pilot programme which could result in Lincoln offering a regular extended course for exiled journalists. Funds are also being sought to repeat the highly successful RAM Project residential study weekends on working in the UK media for up to 60 exiled journalists. In the past these have provided excellent opportunities for networking with UK media colleagues, assessing training needs, and developing services for exiled journalists. It is hoped that future events will include colleagues from Europe.

The RAM Project will continue to provide exiled journalists with free access to specialised journalism and career development courses in conjunction with the NUJ's professional training department. The EJN will also investigate the availability of courses for those who decide to pursue careers outside journalism, and continue to collect and disseminate information about training and funding sources for exiled journalists wishing to further their education.

Above: *Daily Express*, 4 Feb 2005;
Below left to right: *Daily Express*,
23 Feb 2005; *Daily Star*, 17 Jan 2005;
Daily Mail, 12 Jan 2005



Training of trainers

MediaWise has been devising and delivering a wide range of training programmes for many years, in the UK and internationally. Funding is now being sought for training-of-trainers courses, especially for EJM members, to expand MediaWise's network of trainers. This will help exiled journalists not only improve their skills, but also find employment. To this end, EJM members will continue to shadow RAM National Co-ordinator Terry Williams as he delivers use-of-the-media training. This will also help them to continue with setting up media networks and engaging refugee and asylum-seeker groups in media work across the UK regions.

Work placements

Work placements with media organisations help exiled journalists understand how the UK media works, gain contacts for future work and inform coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers. Their presence and editing skills also help other media workers appreciate what it means to be an asylum-seeker or refugee. The Project hopes to repeat work placements with the BBC, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, *Press Gazette* and *Manchester Evening News*, among others. The EJM is also developing an employment strategy for its members.

Exiled Journalists in Europe

Exiled journalists in other countries have already joined the UK-based EJM (a similar organisation exists in Canada), and there is enthusiasm for similar networks elsewhere. At a recent international conference in Holland on diversity and the media, there was considerable interest in replicating the RAM Project's approach there. As an immediate follow-up to this report, and to encourage dissemination of its messages, MediaWise and EJM members intend to visit exiled journalists in Amsterdam, Brussels, Geneva and Paris to conduct interviews, collect information and develop partnership schemes. A report of their findings, *Exiled Journalists in Europe*, will be published to help other organisations concerned with supporting exiled journalists, promoting press freedom and encouraging fair and accurate coverage.

Partnerships

During the year RAM will complete an important media monitoring exercise with the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees and the Refugee Council, to test the effectiveness of the Press Complaints Commission guidance to editors on reporting asylum issues.

If funding is forthcoming RAM hopes to work with the Jesuit Refugee Service, the UNHCR and the International Federation of Journalists on a series of European conferences to improve media coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers. MediaWise and EJM members expect to play a part in a major European EQUAL project, working with UK partners to produce publicity material encouraging employers to make use of refugees' talents. Staff also hope to work with other European organisations around media diversity issues, including the pressing issue of coverage of Roma.

Fundraising

The Open Society Institute has provided a grant to cover salary costs for a year for the RAM Project Communications Officer, Forward Maisokwadzo, an exiled journalist from Zimbabwe. His main work is to manage the RAM Project and develop the EJM. He is also taking a leading role in fundraising as part of RAM's continued support for the development of the EJM.

“

The RAM Project has been invaluable. It has provided me with everything from training to moral support and encouragement. I really appreciate your support and sincerity.

Mansoor Hassan,
journalist exiled
from Pakistan

”



Above: *The Independent*,
23 Feb 2005

At a glance...

Approximate cost:
£1,500 per Bulletin issue
£5,000 a year for website

Funders: Allen Lane Foundation, Barrow Cadbury Trust, Home Office, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Stone Ashdown Trust

RAM Bulletin and website

Summary of activities

A monthly publication providing local activists and journalists with analysis of press coverage and information about dealing with the media effectively. The aim is to provide information quickly and easily, in a format that can be downloaded, reproduced and distributed to local network members.

An easy-to-use, interactive RAM website (www.ramproject.org.uk) was designed and launched in November 2000 to archive the Bulletin and provide other useful links.

Why it happened

During RAM's meetings with NGOs and activists throughout 1999 and early 2000, it became clear that a new channel of communication was needed to disseminate ideas and information about media coverage. Email was obviously the speediest and most cost-effective way of communicating, so RAM set up a monthly e-bulletin and website. The first edition of the RAM Bulletin, as it became known, was published in October 2000.

Aims and objectives

Each edition carries two or more pages of news, a provocative editorial, a real-lives story about the experiences of a refugee or asylum-seeker, a 'cut-out-and-keep' guide to using the media (see panel, right), and a 'peg board' which lists forthcoming events that might make useful hooks for media stories. Since 2003 there has also been a section profiling organisations working with refugees and asylum-seekers, in an effort to map the sector. Wherever possible, the source for each story is indicated, which builds up the website resources page.

The 'Exiled journalists speak out' feature enables guest editors and others to tell their own story. Some have used the opportunity to describe their experience of looking for work as a journalist in the UK. These are features that can be reproduced elsewhere.



The Bulletin effectively combines analysis of media coverage with news about the RAM Project and information about the activities of media networks across the country. Wherever possible it provides readers with access to sources of information (such as telephone numbers, email address and websites). It aims to demystify media coverage.

The news section highlights positive coverage and investigates scare stories - such as The Sun's 'Swan Bake' (see page 55). An important aim is to assist readers who wish to challenge stories by making use of the Press Complaints Commission.

Exiled journalists are expected to source and research news stories. Guest editors produce their own editorial, commission features, and work alongside a sub-editor to prepare the final copy - including checks for libel.

One of the most common problems exiled journalists face is a lack of confidence that they will ever work again in their profession. It is not uncommon for journalists and broadcasters with high profiles in their own countries to end up working as taxi drivers,

administration assistants and nannies in the UK. Editing the *Bulletin* has proved to be a powerful way of restoring confidence, and has prompted several editors to successfully seek freelance work in the mainstream media.

People involved

Initially, the *Bulletin* was edited by Nazand Begikhani, a writer and academic researcher specialising in human rights and gender issues, who was also a refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan. She was appointed in October 2000. Soon after she left to have a baby, other exiled journalists were brought in as guest editors, each working on two consecutive editions, supported by RAM staff and freelance sub-editors. Exiled journalists have also contributed to the development of the website.

Target audience

The *Bulletin* is aimed at all those on the RAM network who have access to the internet. Ideally, subscribers should be part of organisations whose members are willing to make use of the information supplied – the subscriber's task is to digest and disseminate the information among their own network.

The first edition of the *Bulletin* went to over 400 activists throughout the UK and Europe, including national refugee organisations, local groups, RAM media networks and local authority/consortium press officers. A survey in August 2003 showed that 60 per cent of subscribers were also forwarding copies to other contacts – so the total readership is likely to be many times more than the number of copies sent. Respondents said the *Bulletin* was fulfilling a range of functions, from providing useful contacts to publicising positive stories not found in the mainstream media. By 2005, some 1,800 individuals were subscribing. Website visits rose from an average of 779 per month in 2001, to over 10,000 per month in 2005.

Strengths

The *Bulletin* has proved to be an effective tool for both communicating with the network and providing exiled journalists with paid work. It is a low-cost way of publicising events, new reports, speeches and other important information, and has also provided readers with the information and confidence to challenge biased and ill-informed reporting. The website is also a useful resource for journalists, particularly since the introduction of an online version of the *Directory of Exiled Journalists* (see page 46-7), which provides journalistic colleagues with access to people who have direct experience of seeking asylum in the UK.

The *Bulletin* changed when paid guest editors were appointed. They brought a greater variety of stories and features, and their editorials have provided an insight into the impact of negative coverage on the psyches of those demonised by the media.

Lessons learned

Some guest editors have faced difficulties that UK journalists would not encounter – not just the persecution for doing their job that forced them to seek refuge, but separation from their family, possible rejection of their asylum claims, the threat of deportation, and lack of recognition of the skills they could offer to the UK media. Lack of experience and the difficulty of writing in a second language have also meant that some editors have been able to contribute more than others. RAM Project staff have been on hand to ensure consistent quality.



RAM Bulletin use-of-the media features

This is a selection of features that have appeared in the *RAM Bulletin*. They are all available on the RAM website: www.ramproject.org.uk

- Setting up media networks
- Producing a press release
- Writing to editors
- Getting on the airwaves
- Top tips for getting coverage
- Media monitoring of the election
- Ten steps to setting up a website
- Handling a press launch
- Local letter-writing campaigns
- Going on TV
- Handling hostile questions
- Complaining to the PCC
- Letter-writing campaigns
- Free publicity for a campaign
- You have every right to complain
- Righting wrongs on the internet
- Keeping up the pressure
- Web publishing made easy
- How papers spin asylum statistics
- New guidelines for reporting on refugees and asylum-seekers
- A six-point plan for getting messages into the media
- How to attract funding for a regional media group
- Working with local journalists
- Getting your refugee story out

At a glance...

Approximate cost: £30,000, including staff time, hire of premises, travel, refreshments and publicity

Funders: Allen Lane Foundation, Camden Trust, Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement, and the National Union of Journalists

Partners: Tom Hopkinson Centre for Media Research at Cardiff University, the National Union of Journalists, Refugee Studies Centre in Oxford, and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)

Refugees & the Media Forum

Summary of activities

A high-profile conference timed to coincide with a parliamentary debate on asylum policy. It consisted of five 60-minute, moderated discussions designed to examine the ethical, journalistic and social issues that arise from media representations of asylum-seekers and refugees. It took place on Thursday 1 February 2001 in Westminster, London.

Why it happened

The event took place shortly before the start of the general election campaign. RAM was concerned that asylum issues would become even more of a political football, and feared that lives might be put at risk unless there were ground rules respected by politicians and the media alike.

Aims and objectives

The Forum was designed as an opportunity for media professionals, refugees and their support groups to engage in a dialogue about coverage of asylum issues, appreciate their different concerns and priorities, and discuss strategies to ensure fair and accurate reporting.

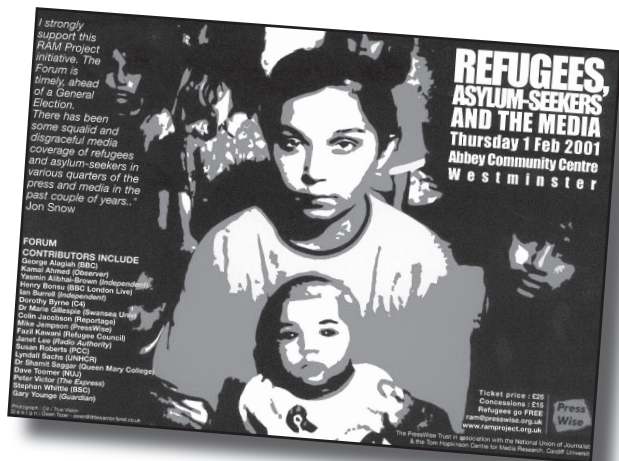
People involved

It brought together over 150 refugees and asylum-seekers, representatives from organisations working with them, media executives, policy makers and regulators (see programme, right). Each session was moderated by a media professional with a firm grasp of the issues who encouraged contributions from the floor and challenged speakers where appropriate.

Channel 4's Dispatches team also previewed a special investigation into the hidden world of Britain's migrant workers, called *Bloody Foreigners*. For six months, a team of four undercover reporters had lived as 'illegal immigrants': joining Albanians exploited by the building trade; coming under attack from racists armed with bricks, bottles and iron railings; and working long hours for low pay. The documentary, broadcast the following weekend, was a powerful insight into the harsh realities of life in Britain's informal economy.

Target audience

Refugees, asylum-seekers, their support organisations, media executives, politicians, think tanks and regulators.



Above: Flier for the Media Forum, February 2001

Strengths

The RAM Project decided to ensure that exiled journalists communicated the messages of refugees and asylum-seekers to their colleagues in the mainstream media. It was particularly encouraging that this technique resulted in extensive coverage on BBC Newsnight and London radio stations on the day, and other media outlets later. The opening hour devoted to the stories of exiled writers was extremely powerful and demonstrated the importance of human interest stories.

Lessons learned

It is important to ensure that people telling personal stories are prepared in advance and protected from prurient media interest afterwards. Equally important is to plan an effective follow-up to events such as these.

Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and the Media Forum

Abbey Community Centre,
34 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BU
Thursday 1st February 2001

The Forum is made up of five sessions examining the ethical, journalistic and social issues raised by media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees.

10.00 – 11.00: WHERE do we fit in?

Refugees and asylum-seekers explain why they have come to the UK and how media coverage has affected their lives here and in the countries they have come from.

Moderator: Yasmin Alibhai-Brown – columnist, The Independent

Contributors: Nazand Begikhani, Zrinka Bralo, Abebe Gelaw, Choman Hardy, Arop Madut-Arop, Hourii Ghamian – exiled journalists

11.00 – 12.00: WHY do sensational stories appear?

The conflicting priorities of journalists and press officers.

Moderator: Henry Bonsu – BBC London Live

Contributors: Ian Burrell – Home Affairs Correspondent, Independent

Fazil Kawani – Communications Director, Refugee Council

Lyndall Sachs – Press Officer, UNHCR

Peter Victor – Assistant Editor, The Express

Gary Younge – The Guardian

12.15 – 13.00: WHEN will it end?

Does media hostility to refugees garner votes or put lives at risk?

Moderator: Gary Younge – The Guardian

Contributors: Dr Marie Gillespie – Swansea University

Colin Jacobson – Editor, Reportage

Dr Vaughan Robinson – Swansea University

Dr Shamit Saggat – Queen Mary College

Prof Theo van Leeuwen – Cardiff University

14.30 – 15.30: WHO sets the tone of the debate?

Does the media lead or follow pundits, politicians or public opinion?

Moderator: George Alagiah – PressWise Trust/BBC

Contributors: Kamal Ahmed – The Observer

Henry Bonsu – BBC London Live

Dorothy Byrne – Commissioning Editor Current Affairs, C4

Richard Allen – Lib-Dems

Clive Soley MP – Labour

15.30 – 16.30: WHAT's to stop us?

What constraints apply to media coverage of such controversial issues? What's the role of media regulators in public debate?

Moderator: Mike Jempson – Director, The PressWise Trust

Contributors: Susan Roberts – Press Complaints Commission

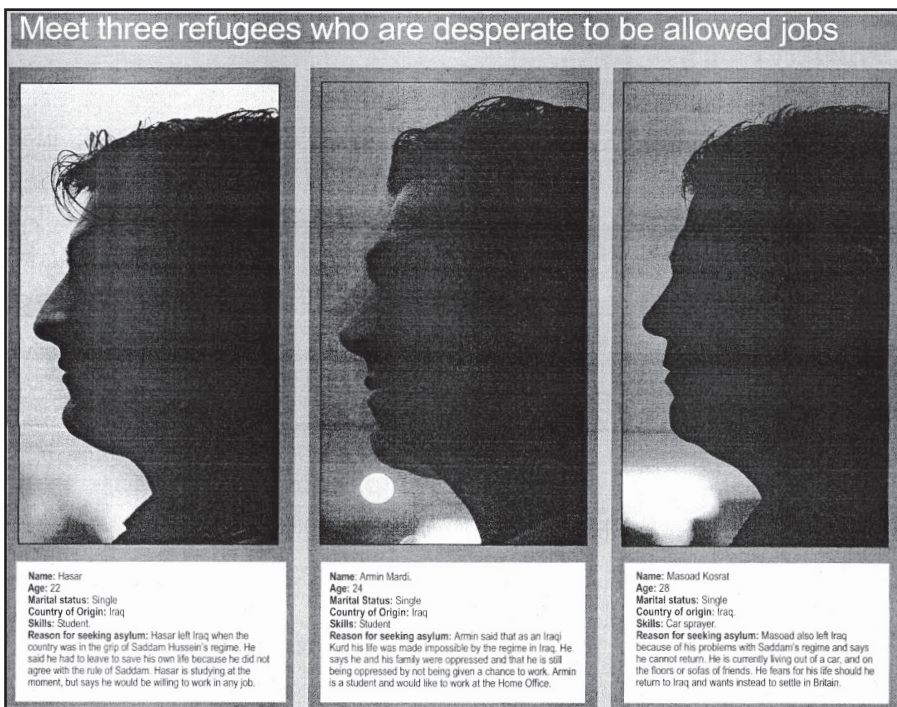
Janet Lee – Radio Authority

Stephen Whittle – Broadcasting Standards Commission

Dave Toomer – President, National Union of Journalists

At a glance...**Cost:** £90,000**Funders:**Barrow Cadbury Trust,
Comic Relief, Home Office
Refugee Integration Unit**Partners:**Amnesty International, NUJ,
Oxfam, Refugee Action,
Refugee Council

Right and bottom right:

Bristol Evening Post, 4 Nov, 2004;Top right: *Independent*, 5 Mar 2002**Where are the Networks?***Active groups:*Birmingham
Dover
Glasgow (2)
Leeds
Manchester
Newcastle
Sheffield
Wales*Groups being rebuilt:*Coventry
Hull
Liverpool*Areas of development work:*Barking
Dagenham
Luton
Norwich
Oxfordshire
Peterborough
West London (6)
Wolverhampton*Folded:*Croydon
York

Regional Media Networks

Summary of activities

Regional Media Networks are made up of individuals and organisations concerned about inaccurate, hostile and inflammatory coverage of asylum-seekers and refugees. They work with local journalists to improve the accuracy of coverage – and many have had considerable success.

Why it happened

Networks are set up after the RAM Project has organised a Communication Day, which brings together refugees, asylum-seekers and organisations such as Amnesty, Oxfam, Student Action for Refugees and others. The part-time RAM team organises a meeting in a city or large town where there is a natural cluster of media (perhaps a TV station, a couple of radio stations, an evening newspaper and a number of weekly newspapers) and explains how a Network can bring about improvement in media coverage.

It is recognised that, generally, where there is poor media coverage from the local and regional media, this is caused by a lack of information and contacts. RAM offers training in understanding and working with the media, and provides a limited amount of mainly telephone and email support for these groups. This development work has been considerably constrained by funding issues. By April 2005, there were 24 Networks, mainly in large towns and cities, but one working across an entire county and another covering the North East Region of England. There are several in London.

Aims and objectives

To improve coverage of asylum and refugee issues by working constructively with the media. Networks do all or some of the following:

- Building relationships with local journalists;
- Helping train and support refugees and asylum-seeker spokespeople;
- Monitoring and, where necessary, challenging the media;
- Organising letter writing campaigns; and
- Seeking placements for exiled journalists in the local media.

People involved

Refugees and asylum-seekers, organisations working with them, editors, journalists, and other concerned groups, supported by Network Co-ordinator Terry Williams. Administrative support is supplied by the RAM Project office.

Strengths

Each Network has its own personality, which depends on its members' skills and time available. One Network concentrates on producing a quarterly magazine giving positive information about refugees and asylum-seekers, while another places a major emphasis on providing media training for refugee men and women (and has been very successful at this work).

Lessons learned

Most have little or no money and are co-ordinated by volunteers. This results in a problem that when a volunteer is unable to continue to work as co-ordinator it can lead to the group collapsing. Terry Williams, who has co-ordinated most of this work, has had to rebuild half of the Networks and RAM now encourages groups to raise money to pay a part-time co-ordinator. Where a co-ordinator is able to fit this work alongside their paid job, the group is much stronger.

RAM Networks from across the UK got together for the first-ever national conference in Birmingham in May 2004. One of the calls from that conference was for better communication between Networks. As a result an e-group was set up so that Networks can share good practice and seek solutions to problems.

Networks have had a real impact on the local media. In Sheffield, members asked if it was possible to make an award to the *Sheffield Star* because of the way its coverage had improved. Members in Leeds have praised the *Yorkshire Evening Post* for its coverage and regularly work with journalists on the paper. In Glasgow there is a close working relationship with the NUJ whose members deliver media training sessions. The real difference is in getting balance into coverage. No-one on RAM or in its Networks has ever said refugees and asylum-seekers want special treatment from the media – but, like everyone else, they are entitled to a fair deal. Where good contacts exist between Networks and local journalists, considerable change is possible.

The future

One major concern raised at the UK meeting was about the sustainability of Networks once the RAM Project came to an end. Few Networks had any money to pay for training or support. It was felt that local Networks should form links with established refugee and asylum-seeker organisations in their areas as these organisations were more likely to be able to attract funds and on-going support. The Networks also felt that local groups could consider buying in training services from members of the Exiled Journalists Network, some of whose members were undergoing Training for Trainers courses.



At a glance...

Approximate cost: £2,000 per event, for venue hire, refreshments, travel and administrative costs, but excluding partners' staff time

Funders: The Home Office Refugee Integration Unit

Partners: ICAR, NUJ, Positive Images sub-group of the Home Office's National Refugee Integration Forum, Refugee Action, Refugee Council

Regional media forums

Summary of activities

A series of informal meetings across the UK bringing together editors and journalists with refugees, asylum-seekers and organisations working on their behalf, to discuss coverage of asylum and refugee issues and make recommendations for improvement. In particular, the events were designed to raise the profile of refugee and asylum-seeker voices in the media.

Five events were held between January and April 2003 in Birmingham, Bristol, Dover, Leeds and Liverpool, with similar events held in Newcastle and Cardiff. The issues were also discussed at the NUJ's Ethics Council. The RAM Project commissioned the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) to monitor the events.

Why they happened

A key activity and strength of the RAM Project has been the establishment of communications networks in cities and large towns across the UK to encourage positive reporting. These networks are most effective when they have direct contact with the media – to break down the barriers between all parties it is vital to bring together local editors and senior media workers with refugees, asylum-seekers and organisations working on their behalf to discuss ways of improving coverage.

Aims and objectives

To effect introductions between interested parties and encourage dialogue between them about how local media coverage of asylum and refugee issues can be improved.

People involved

Some 35 people attended each event. Each panel consisted of a journalist (who explained some of the problems faced by the media covering refugee stories), a representative of one of the refugee organisations (who spoke about the difficulties in dealing with the media), and a refugee or asylum-seeker who spoke about what it feels like to be on the receiving end of bad media coverage. A neutral chair then moderated discussions about how to resolve conflict and misunderstandings.

Target audience

Refugees, asylum-seekers, their support organisations, local and regional media executives.

Strengths

Creating a 'safe' environment in which both refugees and the media can talk openly about mutual problems greatly enhanced communication. Analysis of questionnaires distributed by ICAR to all those who attended the events showed that they successfully initiated dialogue and contacts between the media and the refugee and asylum-seeker support sector. (After each event, attendee contact details were distributed to everyone who had attended (with prior permission) to encourage future contact.) They also substantially improved understanding of the issues which hinder good coverage.

Following the event in Birmingham, for instance, the Birmingham Post and Mail Group considered setting up a three-month work placement for a refugee journalist.

Weaknesses

Co-ordinating a variety of 'special interest groups' around such 'sensitive' events can be extremely problematic. Each has its own agenda and anxieties which have to be taken into account. It's important to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers are properly prepared for meetings with the media: one event had to be rescheduled because proposed participants had not been adequately briefed.

Working with government departments brings its own special problems: the rescheduled event had to be postponed when the Minister chose that day to announce new policy measures.

Lessons learned

Refugees and asylum-seekers said they better understood how the media works and how to approach journalists. They were heartened to learn that the local media did want to hear their stories and saw them as valuable sources of information. Nonetheless, members of the refugee and asylum-seeker support sector tended to be suspicious of the media and failed to differentiate between the well-intentioned and the hostile, while most journalists showed little understanding of the pressures under which refugee agencies operate and the difficulties involved in producing media friendly material to tight deadlines.

The events recognized the value of BBC Radio Kent's dedicated Immigration and Asylum Correspondent, the use of communications strategies and the appointment of media officers by dispersal consortia (such as Yorkshire and Humberside and the West Midlands) and refugee organisations (such as the Refugee Council and Migrant Helpline), and partnership projects such as the Refugees Media Group in Wales and Bristol Defend the Asylum-seekers Campaign's work with the local media (particularly Bristol's *Evening Post*).

Recommendations made by ICAR included:

- The Press Complaints Commission should publish guidelines on terminology and use of language in reporting refugee and asylum issues (The PCC did so in October 2003 – the RAM Project and ICAR have been monitoring its impact.)
- The NUJ should provide regional contact lists of refugee and asylum-seeker support organisations and distribute information to members which challenges myths. (UNHCR funded RAM to produce guidance for reporters working on these issues, with the NUJ Ethics Council – see page 31. The Scottish NUJ also produced a booklet, *Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Scotland*.)
- The refugee and asylum-seeker support sector should be more aware of media needs, and prepare individuals for media interviews and trust the media to treat them fairly. (The Welsh Refugee Media Group produced a publication called *Let's Talk To The Media*.)
- MediaWise should develop its Exiled Journalist Network and secure jobs in the media for its members (see p44).
- The local media and refugee and asylum-seeker support agencies should establish and maintain communication; improve and sustain understanding and information sharing, for example through regular meetings and email groups; and develop human interest and feature articles. (The RAM Project organised a national conference for Media Networks and set up an e-group so they can talk to each other.)

What makes a regional forum successful?

- Clear aims and objectives
- Core group of committed people, including a driven co-ordinator and media savvy members. RAM can help with media training, so get in touch.
- Media training – press releases, running campaigns, etc.
- Getting the facts – the Refugee Council (www.refugeecouncil.org.uk) and Refugee Action (www.refugeeaction.org.uk) will send information sheets. Reading the quality press helps.
- Media monitoring and always challenging bad reporting. Complain to the regulators PCC, Ofcom and/or the BCC's internal regulator.
- Take advantage of events such as Refugee Week, using your skills and experience as a media group to get your voice heard.
- Help other refugees and asylum-seekers and community groups with their own media strategies.
- Correct myths. Challenge distortions at every opportunity. The Refugee Council and RAM have mythbusters on their websites. ICAR runs an inquiry line on responding to stories (020 7848 2103)

(Extract from ICAR's reports on the regional forums)

At a glance...**UK-RMA****Cost:** £10,900**Funders:**

West Midlands
Consortium, NUJ
Branches, Lord Ashdown
Settlement, RAM Project

Partners:

NUJ, Refugees Online

EJN**Cost:** £96,000 (fund-raising target for the first year)**Funders:**

RAM Project and the
Open Society Foundation

Partners:

NUJ & its Black
Members Council

Exiled Journalists Network

Summary of activities

The Exiled Journalists Network (EJN) is a self-help organisation with more than 150 members – all of whom are asylum-seekers and refugees who have fled their home countries after facing persecution mostly because of their work in the media. The EJN is seeking charitable status to provide the following services:

- advice and support to exiled journalists,
- assistance with training and re-skilling,
- help with finding work in the UK media and
- encouraging exiled journalists to contribute their skills to refugee community organisations.

Why it happened

The EJN grew out of an earlier attempt to establish a similar organisation that sought to open up opportunities for refugee journalists in the UK media. Following the RAM Forum in 2001, a group of exiled media workers set up the UK Refugee Media Agency (UK-RMA), supported by the RAM Project, Refugees Online and the National Union of Journalists. It identified more than 50 exiled journalists as potential members, and brought them together to encourage skills-sharing and retraining to enable them to find employment within the UK media or to develop work within the communications and cultural industries. In the process it aimed to challenge and change public perceptions of refugees and asylum-seekers by working closely with other media professionals and refugee community organisations, and act as an agency to promote their journalistic output through a website. An office was opened in London in 2002, but ultimately the UK-RMA was unable to sustain itself.

RAM identified a number of difficulties facing such an ambitious scheme:

- Campaign work to counter hostile media coverage was a key objective but the prime concern of many refugees and asylum-seekers is to overcome their immediate personal, financial, housing, and employment problems;
- Refugees and asylum-seekers need a range of help and advice to help them settle before launching into new careers. Co-ordinating such assistance is demanding of skills, time and resources which were not readily available;
- An inordinate amount of administration and money was required to keep together a disparate group dispersed throughout the UK and to meet the travel and other costs associated with active membership;
- This was a new area of activity for the initiators, and personal problems and commitments limited members' ability to drive the scheme forward;
- With more funds and more stability it might have been possible to sustain the scheme.

The RAM Project listened carefully to the aspirations of UK-RMA members and, after its collapse, sought to provide the infrastructure to enable the concept to survive. In the first instance it made the following decisions:

- To appoint an exiled journalist as Communications Officer for RAM, with a responsibility to develop an online network of exiled journalists.
- To produce a print and online *Directory of Exiled Journalists* (see page 46-7) for which it had negotiated funding on behalf of the UK-RMA.
- To negotiate a special low rate for exiled journalists to become members of the NUJ and to encourage links between union activity on refugee issues and the work of the RAM/EJN initiative.

The NUJ has played an important role in supporting the EJM initiative, including budgeting to allow EJM members to make free use of its professional training programme. Since 2001, the EJM has evolved from a loose association of people identified by UK-RMA and the *Directory* into a powerful network whose members now play an active role within the RAM Project, as advocates for asylum-seekers and refugees, and as contributors to RAM events and to the UK media. Some have been commissioned to undertake work on other MediaWise projects.

As this community grew and began to meet and work together, it became clear that it could and should be organised and controlled by its own members, rather than being managed by the RAM Project team.

Assisted by RAM, the EJM is now seeking sufficient funding to establish itself as an independent charity providing advice and assistance to other exiled journalists and taking forward the groundbreaking work of the Project (see page 73 for details).

Aims and objectives

The EJM aims to:

- Educate the public and decision-makers about the needs and aspirations of exiled journalists, and their positive contributions to UK society;
- Provide advice, support, and vocational and skills training so that members can start new lives and gain employment in the UK;
- Provide a model of good practice, showing a way of overcoming difficulties between different groups and people of different backgrounds;
- Assist exiled journalists to apply their special knowledge and abilities to the benefit of refugee communities;
- Promote press freedom in the UK and overseas;
- Research, publish and distribute information on issues concerning refugees and asylum-seekers.

People involved

RAM's Communications Officer, Forward Maisokwadzo, is chiefly responsible for developing the Network, working with a co-ordinating group of ten refugee journalists and supported by leading journalists and experts in refugee settlement.

Strengths

Developing the EJM has helped refugee journalists to represent themselves and influence the way refugees and asylum-seekers are reported by the UK media, as well as to create their own collective voice, gain access to training and get jobs.

Lessons learned

Creating broad-based self-help groups takes time and care, and requires a wide range of skills. Building trust and credibility is essential, and that means being able to deliver what is promised – which requires funding, time and commitment from people who are often not well-equipped to branch out in new directions in a new environment. Providing administrative stability, constant personal contact, and a sympathetic ear is part of the process, as is winning the backing of organisations already active in the field.

The EJM has a far greater chance of success than its predecessor because it has taken time to establish its credibility and build links that will help to sustain it and attract funding.

“

The RAM Project has opened up the UK media to exiled journalists, and helped us learn new skills. Most of us might have lost the confidence and self-esteem needed for our profession, but the opportunities RAM has provided us with – such as working at the BBC – has filled us with new skills and experience.

Hala Alshabibi,
journalist exiled from Iraq

”

At a glance...**Cost:** £10,000**Funders:**

Barrow Cadbury Trust and Stone Ashdown Trust

Partners: None**Wider beneficiaries:**

The *Directory* generated considerable interest from media and social affairs correspondents, trades union activists and politicians, while providing those listed with work experience, commissions and employment.

Directory of Exiled Journalists

Summary of activities

A publication and website (www.ramproject.org.uk/directory) outlining the skills, expertise and employment history of more than 50 exiled journalists in the UK. The printed version was sent to national and regional newspaper editors, senior broadcasters, and press officers at national refugee organisations. The online version was set up so that the directory could be easily updated and accessed as new members joined the network. The purpose was to encourage editors in both the print and broadcast media to offer employment or commissions to journalists who have fled to Britain after persecution for doing their duty as journalists.

Why it happened

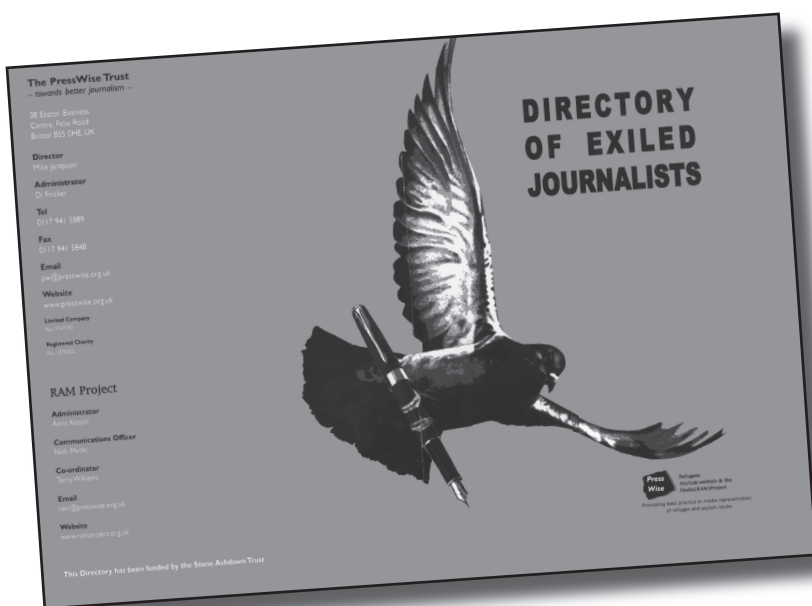
The original idea was put to the UK-Refugee Media Agency as a means of publicising the skills and predicaments of the members and to encourage local, regional or national newspaper editors and broadcasters to provide exiled journalists with work experience, freelance commissions or staff jobs. The alternative for many exiles, over the years, has been to abandon their careers and take up very different forms of employment – notably cab driving, supermarket shelf-filling and security jobs.

The UK-RMA (see page 45-5) never got round to the task, so the RAM Project took it on as a way of keeping the network idea alive. It was the key task of the first RAM Communications Officer, Nick Medic, to assemble the material in a way that would make UK media editors aware of the wealth of largely unused experience and talent they could draw on. The *Directory* highlights the breadth and depth of journalistic experience that is going to waste in the UK, and offers an insight into both the potential and problems of bringing exiles into the newsroom (for instance, some may need help with written English, others have yet to find a permanent place to live). There was, of course, an additional agenda: by getting refugees into newsrooms, the RAM Project hoped to persuade journalists to take asylum issues more seriously and better understand some of the problems their own colleagues have been through. One of the most powerful aspects of the Forum in February 2001 (see pages 38-9) was getting exiled writers and journalists to tell their stories to UK

colleagues – the *Directory* aimed to replicate that experience among those who had not attended the Forum.

Aims and objectives

To bring together in one place a powerful testament to the talent languishing in dispersal areas around the UK, and open eyes both to their stories and their potential as valuable additions to the UK media landscape. To create a directory, easily updated online, that could be accessed by the media and others, as a way of employing the talents of exiled journalists and get them back into work in UK newsrooms.



People involved

The printed version of the *Directory* featured 43 journalists who had fled from 24 countries – from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. The website also contains additional information about newer members of the network. Both provide details of each journalist's training, qualifications, circumstances of exile, the languages they speak and their areas of specialist journalistic knowledge. Some were top-flight journalists in their home country, while other were young reporters just starting out. All of RAM's staff were involved in the production and promotion of the *Directory*.

Target audience

The *Directory* was primarily aimed at commissioning editors in the print and broadcast media. Each exiled journalist featured in the publication also received five copies along with ideas about how to make best use of it to promote themselves.

Strengths

At the end of 2003, the RAM Project was receiving around three media enquiries a week asking for interviews with refugees or asylum-seekers, or help researching articles on asylum issues. Through the *Directory* the Project was able to put media professionals in direct touch with refugees who understood the workings of the media. It also gave exiled journalists the opportunity to express themselves and increase their confidence to consider themselves employable in the UK media job market.

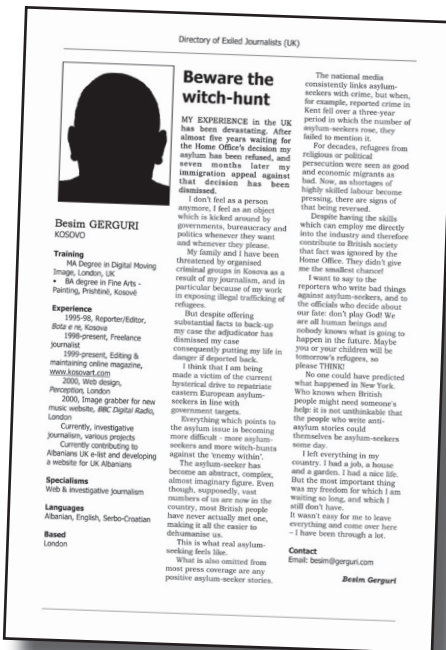
In the two months after publication, four members were invited onto television or radio shows, and another was interviewed in the NUJ's magazine *The Journalist*. Publishing industry magazine *Press Gazette* (see cutting, above, right) and a specialist website for journalists (www.journalism.co.uk/news/story686.html) also featured the *Directory*. Its launch also resulted in the development of a week-long work-experience course at the BBC (see pages 48-9).

Lessons learned

The publication was time-consuming to put together, and required much more work from RAM staff than initially anticipated, but was well-worth the effort. Sub-editing copy and seeking copy approval was especially onerous since the material was being produced by people nervous about making such a high profile entry into the UK media (which had been hostile about refugees and asylum-seekers). Most were not writing in their first language, and few had much knowledge about acceptable styles of expression. Some were reluctant to detail traumatic personal experiences, and others were fearful that it might have consequences for family and friend back home.

However, most were delighted with the outcome, and membership of the *Directory* soon became a matter of pride, since it was a tangible affirmation of their personal worth and achievements.

The biggest problem is always going to be evaluating the effectiveness of such a publication, the time and cost of updating the website, and providing consistent promotion.



What exiled journalists said about work experience...

"At Radio5Live, I was made to work and not just sit around as normally happens with most internships. The team had confidence in me as a journalist to listen and work on actualities. I was able to find an interviewee from Kenya to talk about the constitutional crisis, and the desk decided to take it for one of their stories."

Sandra Nyaira

"My participation in the news and programme development meetings allowed me to better understand the numerous constraints faced by the BBC and the exceptionally huge effort the Corporation deploys to ensure fast, accurate and fair reporting. I was amazed to see how the BBC strikes a balance between speed and accuracy."

Gordon Doh Fondo

"Being at News Online was one of the highlights of my week at the BBC. Until I spent time there I had never considered it a place I would normally look for work as a journalist, but the short time I spent at the Africa Desk and other departments was to change my view forever. I found out that there was a lot more I could do there than I had previously thought."

Clement Ogar

... and about RAM's seminars

"When I came to UK, given the competitive nature of the profession, I never thought that I would be able to work here as journalist. However, the Bristol seminar broke the ice and now I feel confident that it can be done. During the seminar I was able to grasp the basic concept of how the UK media works. It has given me an insight to move forward. Now I precisely know the road that would take me to the profession that I love and have missed for almost four years. I would like to sincerely thank you for reuniting me with my profession."

Meconen Mulgeta

Work experience

Summary of activities

In May 2003, a residential weekend was arranged to encourage exiled journalists back into newsrooms. Some 35 delegates attended seminars on how the UK media operates, training and skills, setting up your own media outfit, and support agencies including media unions. They were supplied with information about career entry points, training agencies, trade magazines and free copies of the *Guardian Media Guide*, supplied by *The Guardian*.

Subsequently, RAM negotiated for exiled journalists to have access to specialist training courses run by the NUJ and other providers. It also arranged work placements at the BBC, *Yorkshire Evening Post* and *Press Gazette*, to help exiled journalists gain experience in the UK media, make contacts for future work, and inform coverage of asylum-seekers and refugees. Finally, the Project has devised a pilot course in conjunction with the Lincoln University School of Journalism offering skills assessment and an introduction to UK media techniques.

Background

During the life of the RAM Project, it has become increasingly clear that one of the best ways to improve coverage would be to get exiled journalists into work with the UK media. This not only helps them but also informs their colleagues about what it means to be an asylum-seeker or refugee. The aims are to:

- Help exiled journalists understand how the UK media operates and get them back into work,
- Bring UK journalists and editors together with exiled journalists, in the hope that they will appreciate their talents and offer them work,
- Help all journalists understand that they are part of an international community of colleagues, and that many of the experiences and difficulties they faced as individuals overlap with those of the group as a whole.

People involved

The person mainly responsible for co-ordinating these activities has been the RAM Communications Officer, himself an exiled journalist. The largest work placement scheme was set up in conjunction with BBC producer Randip Panesar, in March 2004, after she attended a RAM event and heard about the *Directory of Exiled Journalists*. The programme she initiated offered 13 exiled journalists the opportunity to shadow reporters and producers at Radio5Live and the World Service, examine UK radio broadcast techniques and meet programme editors. Some of those who took part have since been offered work at the BBC. It is hoped that the scheme will be repeated at the BBC.

Strengths

The residential weekend put exiles in touch with media figures and with other colleagues who had started their own media projects in the UK. The combined effect of all the exchange of opinion and debate over the three days stimulated exiled journalists to see the media as a field of opportunity rather than an obstacle course. The UK media people present were able to see the breadth of important journalistic



Attendees at RAM's 'Working in the UK Media' seminar (pic: Dragana Ivanovic)

talent and enthusiasm within refugee communities – and that exiled journalists could make a valuable contribution to newsrooms in this country. For the delegates, simply being recognised as journalists rather than as supplicant refugees or asylum-seekers gave them tremendous confidence and a sense of belonging. Meeting other journalists from around the world was also extremely helpful – the RAM Project e-group has been buzzing with activity ever since.

The placements are an opportunity for members to both demonstrate their capabilities and make personal contacts, while gaining practical experience of how newsrooms in the UK operate.

Lessons learned

The residential weekend made clear the importance of assessing the skills levels of those taking part, and tailoring courses for them. Some exiled journalists have realised that their future does not lie in the media, while others have taken new directions, taking degree courses in media management and film production, for example.

The work placements have helped EJM members understand how the UK media operates, while newsrooms benefit from their vast experience and contacts. Many of the members can provide invaluable insights into what's going on in their home countries and regions. They can also help UK reporters understand the difficulties of asylum process.

As newsrooms are very busy places, editors find it time-consuming and difficult to put together a well-structured training scheme for exiled journalists that will benefit both sides. The need for exiled journalists to earn a living can be a stumbling block – some members who are keen to take part in work placements find it difficult to spend two weeks doing unpaid work. Funding and more structured schemes will be a priority for the Exiled Journalists Network. Meanwhile, the RAM Project continues to seek paid and unpaid work placements with the regional media.

“

Since 'Press Gazette' is a supporter of international press freedom, we are more than happy to help this programme. Journalists who have been driven from their own countries purely because of their desire to witness the news deserve our support.

Ian Reeves, Editor

”

At a glance...**Cost:** £7,150

Funders: OL:MCM received European funding, which paid for travel and accommodation for organising committee members attending meetings as well as the operating costs of the project. RAM eventually asked for money in view of the growing amount of work and therefore cost of its involvement, especially once it took on the co-ordinating role. It was given £5,000, which met most of its costs.

Partners:

ZARA (Austria), Centrum Voor Gelijkheid Van Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding (Belgium), Forum van Etnisch-Culturele Minderheden (Belgium), Fair Play (Denmark), City of Helsinki Cultural Office/ RASMUS-Network (Finland), DREAM Greece), Roma Press Center (Hungary), Cospe (Italy) Mira Media (Netherlands) XenoMedia Comunicacio/ Centro de estudios y documentacion sobre racismo y xenofobia (Spain), Quick Response (Sweden)

Week of Action & Monitoring

Summary of activities

The project was set up in 2003 to monitor how people from ethnic minority groups, including refugees and asylum-seekers, are reported in the European media. RAM was first involved as a member of the organising committee, which was co-ordinated by On Line: More Colour in the Media (OL:MCM), a project based in Holland. Later, RAM agreed to be the UK co-ordinator for the Week of Action and Media Monitoring.

Why it happened

RAM's work is concentrated in the UK although it has some links with European refugee and asylum groups. We hoped that participation would enable us to share the knowledge and skills built up over the lifetime of the Project. It would also give us a better view of European media coverage.

Aims and objectives

To carry out one day of professional media monitoring in each participating European country. In Britain the Commission for Race Equality took on this part of the work. In November 2003 various European organisations took part in a less formal week of media monitoring and organised a series of events ranging from public meetings to debate media issues, to face-to-face meetings with senior journalists to discuss media coverage.

People involved

About a dozen European organisations involved in media campaigning undertook a variety of activities. An organisation paid to co-ordinate the professional media coverage failed to come up with an easy-to-use monitoring form for volunteers. RAM produced one and this was used by some of the participating organisations. RAM used volunteers, recruited from around the UK, to fill in the monitoring forms.

Target audience

The European media – to look for any changes and improvements in coverage, and make journalists aware of the impact of negative coverage.

Strengths

It improved our links with European organisations working in similar areas and encouraged RAM to record and publish the extensive information gained during the five-year period of the Project on its website. RAM was able to take part in several public debates in the UK and organise a debate between host community journalists and exiled journalists.

Challenges

It took a great deal of time and cost RAM money from its limited resources. The final project details came together very late in the day making it difficult to co-ordinate an effective Week of Action. Exiled journalists in the UK were invited to take part in the week of monitoring, write stories and give interviews, but there was little interest, which reflects the fact that refugee journalists' main interest is survival rather than taking part in campaign work.

Lessons learned

The project could have been better organised at the European level.

RAM should not have taken on the responsibility as UK co-ordinator until a proper agreement had been reached.

Black and white and read all over

Misleading statistics and knee-jerk headlines about asylum-seekers have led to widespread ignorance among the public, warns **Mike Jempson**.

In October 2000, British newspapers reported two significant events concerning media representations of conflict. In Arusha, Tanzania three media professionals are currently facing charges before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda of incitement to genocide. Two of the men were associated with Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines which broadcast hate speech against Tutsis and those who opposed the Hutu administration. The third man ran a newspaper called *Kangura* which backed the inflammatory broadcasts of what became known as 'Radio Hate'.

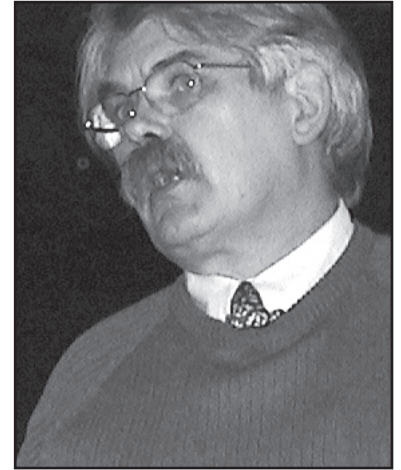
In his report for *The Independent*, Julian Lee reminded us that this was the first time journalists have faced such charges since the trial and execution of Julius Streicher, Hitler's notorious propaganda chief and editor of *Der Sturmer*, whose excesses fuelled the murder of six million Jews, Roma, trades unionists, homosexuals, socialists, Christians and communists. What has become euphemistically known as 'ethnic cleansing' in Rwanda led to countless deaths and the creation of some millions of refugees who fled to surrounding countries.

There are no such hideous statistics in the UK where a mere 70,000 people who have fled poverty, persecution and war are currently seeking asylum. Many of the more recent arrivals have been seeking refuge from the aftermath of civil war and NATO bombing in the Balkans. Some others, like the 58 Chinese youngsters who perished in the back of a truck last summer, may be seeking refuge for quite different reasons.

However, according to a widely reported survey conducted for the eminently respectable *Readers' Digest* magazine by the equally respectable MORI Poll organisation, the public appear to think that Britain is being overrun by foreigners flocking to our coastline attracted by the prospect of generous state benefits and a new life. Apparently 80 per cent of British people believe that refugees see the UK as a 'soft touch', and 63 per cent of the population think asylum-seekers pick up £113 a week from the state – in fact they receive just £36.54 and most of that is in the form of vouchers which can only be exchanged for food, with no cash reimbursements if they underspend. The poll revealed that the majority of British people believe that 20 per cent of the UK population are immigrants, and 26 per cent of the population are from ethnic minorities. In actual fact only seven per cent of the population are from ethnic minorities and only about four per cent are first generation immigrants.

Who is to blame for such an extraordinary level of ignorance that consistently gets facts wrong by a factor of over three? Are the media so powerful as to be able to generate mass killings, and convince people that black is white?

It would be wrong to lay the blame entirely at the door of the media, but equally it is not good enough simply to point the finger at politicians who deliberately misrepresent the situation for their own ends. Both feed off each other. However, as every politician knows, pandering to popular



Mike Jempson is the Founder and Director of The PressWise Trust, now MediaWise. A campaigning journalist, author and trainer, he has more than 30 years' experience in the trade.

**A presentation to
the Finnish Refugee
Council in Helsinki
on 10 Nov 2000**

prejudice has always been a good way of winning support, and newspaper owners are in the business of selling more newspapers every day, not just trying to win votes every few years.

A general election is expected in the UK in the next year and asylum is high on the agenda. This makes for a lethal cocktail as politicians make capital out of public unease and the press provides evidence to back up popular prejudices. The situation is exacerbated when facts are misrepresented or incompletely explained. The real danger here is that inflammatory claims by politicians make headlines, and sensational news stories prompt politicians to devise instant opinions, in order to gain publicity before a 'hot' issue dies down. As a result policy can suddenly be driven by irrational, knee-jerk reactions that hinder if not actually harm the prospects for better understanding and humanitarianism.

A case in point is the way the press and politicians responded to the arrival of about 180 Roma refugees from Slovakia over one weekend in October 1997. On Monday 20 October the national newspapers were full of it, as these headlines show (see left). The language perhaps says it all – and local papers were even more vitriolic. Panic set in, and soon the Home Secretary Jack Straw announced that Slovak nationals would be required to pay for visas if they wanted to visit the UK, among a raft of other restrictions designed to demonstrate that the government was responding to public concern. Predictably this led to even greater hostility to Roma in Slovakia, since they were seen as to blame for the additional inconvenience and cost to business and leisure travellers. Ironically this was likely to have the effect of increasing the numbers of Roma seeking to escape from discrimination and violence there.

The initial coverage suggested that these asylum-seekers were feckless, impoverished, and desperate to avail themselves of the 'good life' that the British welfare state could offer. Newspapers cited a Czech TV documentary screened a year earlier as the cause of the sudden increase in arrivals, because it had shown a Roma asylum-seeker praising the British benefit system. A similar programme about Canada was also claimed to have increased the number applying for asylum, and also led to the imposition of visa requirements.

None of the newspapers reported that most of those who arrived in Dover came because they already had relatives living in the UK, nor, initially, that many thousands more had already sought asylum in other European countries. British readers were offered no information about racist murders and assaults, forced sterilisation, ghettoisation and the daily discrimination and abuse heaped upon the Roma in Slovakia and elsewhere in the region. It is the height of hypocrisy to claim that a foreign TV documentary can set off a mass exodus, yet to deny that a mass circulation daily newspaper does not influence public opinion. The media are always quick to deny their influence when it is perceived as negative, and always keen to claim the credit when positive ends are achieved. This may be 'human nature' but it is extremely inhumane when, for instance, a newspaper happily makes profits by sensationalising events and neglecting to provide the whole story.

It seems to me that it is entirely appropriate to suggest that the ignorance demonstrated by the *Readers Digest* poll is directly related to the hysteria and misinformation generated by the sort of hostile and incomplete coverage we witnessed in Dover. And from ignorance flows hostility that

UK press headlines about the arrival of Slovakian Roma in 1997

Resentment as 'invasion' continues
Daily Telegraph

Gypsies invade Dover hoping for a handout
The Independent

Dover overwhelmed by Gypsy asylum-seekers
The Times

Tide of Gypsy asylum ebbs
The Guardian

The Dover Deluge: Pleas for action as port is flooded by gipsy [sic] asylum-seekers
Daily Mail

Gipsy scam grows: Thousands on the way seeking benefits cash
The Express

3,000 gypsies head for England: We have best handouts
The Sun

Crisis talks on Gypsies
The Mirror

can easily turn into violence. Racist attacks, the burning of refugee hostels, the rise of fascistic political parties, are all features of 'Fortress Europe' which are no less dangerous for those who seek refuge among us than the rantings on Radio Hate in Rwanda.

This is not an attack on journalists – but it *is* an attack on bad journalism. Those who cover conflict often put themselves at risk to bring us information about what is happening, simply by being there but also by telling unpalatable truths that offend powerful forces. In 1999 the Committee to Protect Journalists reported 34 journalists killed in the line of duty. By July of this year 23 had already been slain. In places like Serbia and Sierra Leone where the loyalties of journalists are under constant scrutiny by the power elites and the readers, reporting the truth is exceedingly dangerous. When attitudes are so polarised the journalist is most at risk.

However within 'Fortress Europe' there are fewer risks and it should be easier for journalists to display honesty and integrity in their work by ensuring that all sides of each story are told. Unless minority voices are accorded the same respect as those of 'the mainstream' population, what can easily develop is a sense of superiority and distrust within the 'host' community. By operating ethically, media professionals can help to engender trust and reduce the social tensions that derive from ignorance.

One problem of course is that the indigenous population, especially at a local level are more likely to know how to win sympathy and headlines than recent arrivals in a strange country and support organisations that are more concerned with meeting immediate physical needs. It is also true that reporters under pressure and with little knowledge of complex international affairs, will often take the easy way out – reporting about local dissent without investigating the stories of those seeking refuge.

For instance, Afghan passengers from a hijacked plane that was forced to land in the UK earlier this year were eventually housed, temporarily, in a deserted training centre in the west of England. The local paper ran front-page stories about the objections of local residents who were angry because this accommodation had not been made available to them when they had been evacuated from their homes during floods a few months earlier. The reason was simple – the authorities considered the building to be 'unfit for human habitation'. At no point did anyone raise the more important question: why are young Afghan children and their parents being housed in conditions that no British person would be allowed to live in?

Commenting on 'the trivialising coverage' of the hijacking in the UK media, the British Refugee Council described it as 'ludicrous and hysterical'. Its press officer considered many of the reports 'vitriolic and unfair' and referred to it as 'one of the most disheartening periods of relentless media hostility' to refugees that she had experienced.

It is this type of situation that the PressWise Trust is seeking to address. Our Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Media Project is designed to empower people in their relations with the media, and to alert media professionals to their ethical responsibility to provide accurate, considered and balanced information. PressWise was established in 1993 to provide advice and support for those who are treated unfairly by the media, as well as to encourage media professionals to take some responsibility for the consequences of unethical reporting.

“

This is not
an attack on
journalists – but
it IS an attack on
bad journalism.

Mike Jempson,
MediaWise director

”

Our work on refugees mirrors work we have undertaken on children's rights and the media representation of other minorities. We believe that press freedom is a responsibility exercised by journalists on behalf of the public and that the public has the right to expect accurate reporting and swift corrections when the media gets things wrong.

To these ends we are setting up networks of concerned citizens willing to both supply journalists with accurate information and to challenge the media when they get things wrong. The idea is to create networks of articulate and committed people, train them to be confident in their dealings with the media, and generate positive stories which ensure that the voices of asylum-seekers and refugees are heard. At the same time we are working with the journalists' union to generate interest among media professionals in the human interest and human rights issues that so often get ignored when newspapers concentrate on sensationalism.

The most important element is to be able to provide reliable information – especially when governments are reluctant to do so. An information vacuum creates conditions in which rumour and innuendo take precedence and lack of knowledge is revealed as the most dangerous context in which to make judgements.

Our project aims to give confidence to refugees and their supporters as well as to encourage best practice in media coverage of refugee and asylum issues. If they are able to communicate their messages – especially about the conditions from which they have fled and the conditions which they must now endure – we hope that it will be more difficult for opinion-formers and decision-makers to pander to prejudice and ignore the human plight of those who have been forced to abandon families, homes and livelihoods to find peace and safety elsewhere.

It is often said that the media thrives on conflict, but there is a growing view among some journalists that our task is to undermine conflict. Since we demand the freedom to investigate and report on behalf of the public, and rely upon the concept of rights as codified in the UN Declaration in justification, the work of the journalists should be to promote harmony and respect for human rights. That does not mean ignoring or understating real conflict, but it does mean trying to explain both causes and effects. It should also, perhaps, include identifying and giving voice to alternative points of view so that the public is aware that violence and misery are not the inevitable consequence of disputes and social crises.

In conclusion, I'd urge media professionals and everyone associated with refugees and asylum-seekers to find new ways of keeping the public informed about the consequences of socially divisive policies and the impact of unwise geo-political and economic decisions – in particular by highlighting the human stories of survival and hope alongside those of tragedy and despair. Early in 2001 we shall be bringing together refugees and their support groups with media professionals, media regulators and academics to discuss some of these issues – and in particular to examine the impact of negative media coverage on the mental and physical well-being of those trying to reconstruct their lives in exile. I hope that colleagues in Finland and elsewhere in Europe will be able to attend, so that between us we can create a more healthy public dialogue that addresses strategies for change in the way that asylum-seekers are treated when they seek refuge in our countries and in the ways they are represented in the media.

Swan Bake: making a meal of a myth

When *The Sun* published a story accusing asylum-seekers of eating swans, **Nick Medic** quickly proved that it was untrue and filed a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission. Five months later, he was still waiting for a reply...

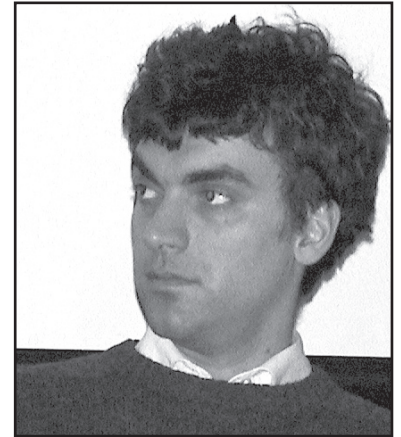
'Swan Bake: Asylum-seekers steal the Queen's birds for barbecues' yelled *The Sun's* banner headline on Friday 4 July 2003. The opening paragraph asserted: 'Callous asylum-seekers are barbecuing the Queen's swans, *The Sun* can reveal. East European poachers lure the protected Royal birds into baited traps, an official Metropolitan Police report says.'

As a journalist who had been watching press reporting on asylum issues for a long time, I felt that this story merited investigation – I was immediately suspicious that it was, by and large, a work of fiction. Other members of the RAM network were outraged by the story. Many of them had fled for their lives because their regimes did not take kindly to journalists digging up the truth; yet here in the UK journalists seemed to get away with fabrication, especially when they were looking for scapegoats.

The intro to a continuation story on page seven, under the headline 'Asylum gang had 2 swans for roasting', raised doubts in my mind about the validity of the claims. It read: 'Police swooped on a gang of East Europeans and caught them red-handed about to cook a pair of royal swans. The asylum-seekers were barbecuing a duck in a park in Beckton, East London. But two dead swans were also found concealed in bags and ready to be roasted. The discovery last weekend confirmed fears that immigrants are regularly scoffing the queen's birds.'

Information about arrests usually includes the names and ages of those involved, but the normal details were conspicuously absent. I called police officers across East London – in stations at West Ham, North Woolwich, Forest Gate and Beckton – but none of them could confirm that anyone had been arrested, charged or even cautioned over such an offence. I then called Steve Knight of the Surrey-based Swan Sanctuary, who had been quoted in *The Sun* as saying: 'To these people (Eastern Europeans) they are a perfectly acceptable delicacy.'

Knight said *The Sun* had not published a faithful transcript of his words. More importantly he could not confirm that an incident such as the one described had ever happened. He was able to tell me that a member of the public had phoned him some time previously and claimed that, looking from his window, he could see someone pushing a swan in a shopping trolley. But he had no way of knowing whether even this was true. I had quickly established that there had been no swoop, no arrests – and probably no roasting incident either. But it wasn't just the dubious headlines, intros, or the recipe for roast swan that I found distasteful. Implicit throughout was the notion that someone from Eastern Europe would be happy to eat a swan. As an Eastern European who has sought asylum in the UK, I have to admit that my own feathers had been ruffled by this. To be clear: I understand that different cultures have different dietary preferences; yet, here was a statement which was not only untrue, but also implied a degree of barbarism and savagery.



Nick Medic is a freelance journalist from Serbia. At the time he made the complaint he was Communications Officer with the RAM Project.

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15 July 2004



Eastern Europe covers a vast tract of land from the Ural Mountains to the Mediterranean with an estimated population of around 200 million people. Of course, I cannot say that in a landmass stretching some 4,000 miles, someone somewhere had not eaten a swan. But I have never been informed that swan is 'an acceptable delicacy' in our part of the world.

Further research uncovered more factual gaps in *The Sun* story. The Metropolitan Police press office was unable to confirm the existence of an 'official report' upon which *Sun* journalist Mike Sullivan had supposedly based his claim that 'Eastern European poachers lure the protected Royal birds into baited traps'. What appeared to have been circulated was an internal memo from the Wildlife Protection Squad advising officers about the law should they come across people interfering with swans. I believe that document was never actually seen by anyone at *The Sun*, which is why it was erroneously cited as a 'report'.

All the while emails poured in, reiterating colleagues' indignation that *The Sun* could get away with creating an urban myth that was bound to infuriate the animal-loving subjects of the British monarch, and make life even tougher for anyone suspected of being an Eastern European or an asylum-seeker. We felt that establishing that the story was spurious might stop it snowballing into one of those distorted and dangerous slanders that have circulated for generations against Gypsies or Jews. So together we expressed our concerns in an official complaint to the Press Complaints Commission on 10 July. The PCC replied by saying that they had already taken up a complaint from someone else and would let us have a further response in due course.

As that had not come within four weeks, we sent the PCC a reminder on 12 August. They replied a week later enclosing a copy letter from *The Sun's* Ombudsman William Newman dated a month earlier (18 July) in response to the other complainant. It offered a summary version of the Wildlife Crime Unit 'report' and ended defiantly: 'In short, we stand by our story'.



On the day we received this we asked the PCC for the copy of the report. Already *The Independent* and *The Guardian* had queried the validity of this new urban myth. But within days of its Swan Bake story, under the headline 'Now they're after our fish!' *The Sun* was claiming that fish stocks in lakes and rivers are down because asylum-seekers were poaching them. Then, on 31 August, the *Daily Star* ran a front-page story headlined: 'Asylum-seekers eat our donkeys'. It stated: 'Police hunt rustlers after 9 are snatched'. If it was not immediately clear whether this meant nine donkeys or nine rustlers, and observant reader might have entertained doubts about the story after careful reading. The story claimed (my emphasis throughout): 'Asylum-seekers have stolen nine donkeys - and police believe they've killed and eaten them... The pets - which gave kids rides at a Royal Park - are said to have been stolen by East Africans who see their meat as a delicacy... Officers investigating the rustling believe the donkeys... have been chopped up and eaten...' 'One of our main lines of inquiry is that they may have been taken by immigrants who like eating donkey meat'.

A complaint from someone who said that it was discriminatory for the *Star* to present such allegations as factual, was dismissed by the PCC on the grounds that the allegation is clearly presented as comment. However it agreed to investigate another complaint about inaccuracy which pointed out

that eating donkey meat is forbidden in Somalia under Islamic law. It was not until 8 September that the PCC forwarded us another letter from *The Sun*. Curiously, it was dated 15 July – three days earlier than the one we had already been sent. It referred to a Metropolitan Police Wildlife Unit ‘report’ with a transcription of the reporter’s shorthand notes about its content. Sullivan claimed to have spoken to ‘various swan rescue organisations who have compiled reports from members of the public about swans being snatched for food by asylum-seekers’, and said that the Swan Sanctuary had told him of ‘an incident the previous Sunday where two swans had been found in a mail bag next to a barbecue on which a duck was being cooked’. This did not quite tally with the original report, but he did include a Metropolitan Police press office number, which I immediately rang to double check his story. I was told to put my request in writing. On 17 September, Detective Chief Superintendent Tristram Hicks replied to my letter. He stated:

We never released a report on this subject to The Sun newspaper so we are not sure to what they were referring. We think that they may have meant an internal intelligence note that was sent to... police stations by our Wildlife Unit earlier this year... This one page note was prompted by numerous reports from the public that swans were being killed and eaten by people they believed to be Eastern Europeans... Nobody has been arrested or charged in relation to offences against swans by the Metropolitan Police recently... The Sun... referred to asylum-seekers being responsible. We have no information at all that supports this contention and indeed when we spoke to... Mike Sullivan, he agreed that this was a mistake on The Sun’s part.

When I sent this letter to the PCC, *The Sun* suddenly offered to publish a ‘clarification’. It read:

A report in The Sun on the 4th July about the disappearance of swans in southern England stated that asylum-seekers were responsible for poaching them. While numerous members of the public alleged that the swans were being killed and eaten by people they believed to be Eastern European, nobody has been arrested in relation to these offences and we accept that it is not therefore possible to conclude yet whether or not the suspects were indeed asylum-seekers.

But this ‘clarification’ failed to make clear that there was absolutely no evidence that asylum-seekers were responsible for the alleged disappearance of swans in South East England. So we compiled our own version of a correction and apology and asked *The Sun* to publish it as prominently as the original story. It read:

Swan Bake: A Correction And Apology

A report in The Sun of the 4th July, headlined on the front page SWAN BAKE, stated that gangs of Eastern European asylum-seekers were responsible for the disappearance of swans from southern England. The story was based on unsubstantiated allegations made by unnamed members of the public who claimed to believe that swans were being killed and eaten by Eastern Europeans. The police have confirmed that nobody has been arrested for such offences, and they have no evidence that asylum-seekers or Eastern Europeans are responsible for reported reductions in the swan population. The

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Exiled journalists were outraged by the story. Many of them had fled for their lives because their regimes did not take kindly to journalists digging up the truth – yet UK journalists seemed to be getting away with fabrication

Nick Medic, RAM Project
Communications Officer

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We may not have got an honest clarification and apology, but we sent a powerful message to the press and the PCC that this kind of journalism is wholly unacceptable

Nick Medic, RAM Project Communications Officer

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Sun accepts that it is not possible to conclude whether the offences described actually occurred. We would like to apologise for any false impression that may have been given.

However, *The Sun* refused and we asked the PCC to adjudicate on the matter. Our hopes were buoyed when, on 23 October, the PCC issued guidance to editors about reporting on refugee and asylum issues, underlining ‘the danger that inaccurate, misleading or distorted reporting may generate an atmosphere of fear and hostility that is not borne out by the facts’ (see page 28). So imagine our amazement when the PCC issued its judgement on 17 November, four and half months after the offending article appeared. Its letter read:

In this instance the Commission noted that the newspaper was unable to provide any evidence for the story which, to its readers would appear to be a factual account. Although the newspaper should have ensured that the article was presented as conjecture in the first instance the Commission noted that the publication had offered to print a clarification... to ensure that readers were aware that the statement was based on inconclusive material. The Commission noted that your proposed draft clarification was more comprehensive than that suggested by the newspaper, but considered that the original proposal constituted sufficient remedial action... (and) concluded that no further action was required on the part of the newspaper...

In other words, to correct a sensational front page story which had entered the popular imagination and been quoted in public debate for five months, *The Sun* was simply obliged to run a disclaimer acknowledging that they confused conjecture with fact!

It takes time to distribute correspondence and gather replies from people living in different parts of the UK, and to agree a common position. The patience of most had long been exhausted and some were furious, especially those who were aware that the Director of the PCC was a personal friend of the editor of *The Sun*. On Thursday 4 December we emailed our response to the PCC. It read:

In the light of the 4th paragraph of your letter, and the guidelines recently issues by the PCC, we fail to see why the Commission cannot support the wording we have proposed over that of The Sun. We are reluctant to accept that The Sun’s ‘clarification’ will adequately inform the public that the original story, which has become an urban myth, was inaccurate and unfounded. However, since the Commission’s adjudication suggests that there is no other option than to accept The Sun’s wording, it would appear that we have no choice in the matter. We would like to know what prominence The Sun is expected to give to its ‘clarification’ and when it will appear

On Saturday 6 December, with no forewarning, *The Sun* published its ‘clarification’ – on page 41! Few of those involved in this complaint consider themselves satisfied either by the outcome – or the way the matter was handled by the PCC. *The Sun* had resolutely fobbed-off complainants with a curt: ‘We stand by our story’. We may not have got an honest clarification and apology, but we sent a powerful message to the press and the PCC that this kind of journalism is wholly unacceptable.

Kick 'em out – they can't be trusted

The tabloids blame asylum-seekers for everything from terrorism to TB. But editors' racism is where the real danger lies, says the RAM Project's Forward Maisokwadzo.

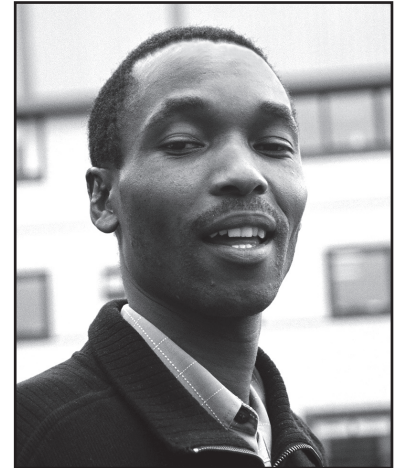
In the last year, our tabloid newspapers have blamed asylum-seekers for terrorism, TB, AIDS, SARS, failing schools and failing hospitals. Articles have blamed them for falling house prices and rising house prices. They've been held responsible for everything from road accidents to dwindling fish stocks. *The Sun* blamed them for declining numbers of swans. *The Daily Star* blamed them for missing donkeys.

If asylum-seekers did not exist, they would have to be invented. When every major and minor problem of the day can be blamed on a small number of outsiders who make up a tiny fraction of the population and expend a tiny fraction of the public purse, then genuine democracy has collapsed. The so-called asylum problem is nothing really to do with asylum-seekers – it's a failure of democracy.

Ten years ago, 'asylum-seeker' was a technical, legal term rather than part of Britain's everyday language. But during the nineties, the phrase gradually entered popular usage. At first, it was synonymous with the word 'refugee', which at the time still had connotations of people fleeing tragedies. Then, as the decade continued, asylum-seeking became progressively criminalised. By the end of the nineties, refugees discovered trying to enter Britain were described by the media – even the BBC – as 'suspected asylum-seekers', as if to seek asylum was itself an offence. By this time, asylum-seeker had become little more than a term of abuse, equivalent in meaning to the phrase 'illegal immigrant'. Indeed, the tabloids used the two terms interchangeably, along with 51 others, according to research from Article 19.

Asylum-seeker stories are now a staple in the tabloid diet, with a front page story almost once a week and inside stories almost every day. Among the tabloids, the variation between different titles is minimal: the *Mail's* viciousness stands out; the *Mirror* is sometimes more generous. But it is the uniformity of the characterisation that is striking, the lack of dissident voices or opposing viewpoints. Almost without exception, asylum stories feed into the mythology of suspicion and deterrence: they can't be trusted; we need tighter controls.

It was in Dover in 1999 that we first saw how newspapers could exploit the asylum issue in such a dramatic way. From 1996, around 750 asylum-seekers, mainly Roma refugees fleeing persecution in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, had been housed in Dover. Their total number made up 0.4 per cent of the local population, but local newspapers, particularly the *Dover Express* and the *Folkestone Express*, both edited at the time by Nick Hudson (a former editor of the *Sunday Sport*) referred to thousands of asylum-seekers flooding the area and running down the welfare state. Asylum-seekers were described as 'bootleggers' and 'scum of the earth', 'targeting our beloved coastline'. Hudson even called on his readers to clear the 'backdraft of a nation's human sewage'. When fighting broke out between asylum-seekers and local youths at a fairground in August 1999, the asylum issue hit the national newspapers in a way it had never done before. The *Daily Mail* published its own 'investigation into Britain's



Forward Maisokwadzo is an exiled journalist from Zimbabwe. He is now Communications Officer with the RAM Project.

Speech to AMITY Media Group on 14 June 2004, as part of Refugee Week

Below: *Daily Mail* headline,
30 Nov 1998

Exclusive: Grim parade in our courts

BRUTAL CRIMES OF THE ASYLUM SEEKERS

immigration crisis' headed 'The good life on asylum alley'. Dover was presented as a town under siege, swamped by foreigners, who were, as the *Mail* put it, 'playing the asylum appeals process'. According to the reports, a threshold of tolerance had been crossed: a violent reaction was the natural and understandable response.

The government's solution was to implement a national dispersal programme which would 'spread the burden' across the UK. The argument was that lower numbers of asylum-seekers in any one place would ease their integration. The Home Office first suggested that an acceptable number of asylum-seekers was one for every 200 local residents. Then it was upped to one for every 500. It was a return to the 'numbers game' agenda of the late 1960s. By talking of 'quotas by locality', the implication was that it was the supposedly large numbers of asylum-seekers arriving that were to blame for the violence, rather than the stigmatising logic of the government's own asylum system. The 'dispersal' solution, therefore, rather than solve the problem of anti-refugee hostility, led to the Dover experience being repeated across the country, as asylum-seekers were sent out to deprived parts of northern cities where accommodation was cheapest. It was an arrangement that set the mould for a vicious circle of resentment, which we are still locked in today.

You will all have your own examples of negative stereotyping of asylum-seekers in the press. Here are mine. From the *Mail* we have had headlines such as 'Brutal crimes of the asylum-seekers' (see left), which claimed that asylum-seekers were having a 'devastating impact' on crime in

London and that the government's 'open door' policy must be ended. Another article, under the headline 'Suburbia's little Somalia', described how Somali asylum-seekers who had settled in 'affluent, middle-class Ealing... thousands of miles away from the dusty plains of East Africa' were bringing down the neighbourhood with drugs and crime. In the *News of the World* we had 'Hand out UK: how many refugees are living in YOUR town?' This piece featured a detailed map of Britain, listing by council the exact number of asylum-seekers in each area and warning readers of the cost to their local services and to the 'British taxpayer'. The article effectively gives a green light to every local racist. In an article last year from the *News of the World* entitled 'Britain's £1bn asylum bill...' we were told that 'Housing asylum-seekers in Britain will cost the taxpayer more than £1 billion this year. That's £33 for every one of the nation's 30 million taxpayers. It's enough to put up to TEN 450-bed new hospitals or pay off the combined £200 million debt of the NHS five times over. It could also pay for 50,000 new teachers or 80 secondary schools.' The scapegoating is clear.

For the tabloids, to attack asylum-seekers is just common sense. It is not perceived as part of a racist programme but, at worst, a xenophobic one. The difference is crucial: whereas racism denotes a social process of exclusion based on colour or cultural difference, xenophobia suggests a natural psychological reaction against 'strangers'. The first is an indictment of a social system, the second taken to be a normal part of human nature. Hence it appears that those who propound the view that too many are coming are not racists to be cast out of the political mainstream – they are merely fearful of the impact that large numbers of new arrivals will have on the nation, and that is considered a legitimate political viewpoint. As such,

xenophobia provides an alibi for racism. But if this is just a natural fear of strangers, why does it not take all strangers to be equally strange? When whites from Australia, South Africa or Zimbabwe come to Britain, they do not produce the same fears as those who are marked out by their skin colour, accent or dress as being of a 'lesser breed'. The whole language of 'bogus' and 'illegal' is simply not applied to the large numbers of Australians working without proper documents in London.

Scotland Yard has stated publicly that negative newspaper articles lead directly to an increase in violence against asylum-seekers. This is the human cost of a newspaper industry that systematically refuses to take responsibility for its part in popularising a new kind of racism.

This new racism springs, I would suggest, from revolutionary changes in the global economy. Advances in information technology have provided the opportunity for economic globalisation, a process led by transnational corporations. Not only can industrial production be freely relocated to wherever labour is cheapest but even services can uproot themselves – as shown by the growing exodus of call-centre jobs to Asia. The old concept of the nation-state which, at least in principle, aimed at securing the highest welfare for the national community, has given way to a concept of the state aimed at maximising market opportunities for individuals. Globalisation itself is eroding the boundaries of national sovereignty, by encouraging free trade across borders, through the forced migration of large numbers of people and through the threat of military intervention against those who oppose the dictates of Washington.

But there is little understanding of what drives these changes and still less opportunity to intervene in them. As power has shifted to the global level, democracy has withered within national boundaries, which means that globalisation is experienced as an alien force over which we have no control. And immigrants, as the most obvious manifestation of the new global forces, are easy targets.

It is a racism based on insecurity, anger and hysteria. It finds support in the suburbs or the countryside as easily as in the inner-city. Its main focus is the new migrants to Britain – whether asylum-seekers, workers from eastern Europe or workers from outside the West. Muslims come in for particular hatred. It regards these groups as responsible for the erosion of the welfare state, even though there would not be a welfare state without them. It regards the loss of national sovereignty as their fault, even though they too have been victims of globalisation. It regards these groups as culturally inferior, having nothing to contribute to the world. The most powerful outlet for these views has been the popular press.

How do we challenge this? Organisations such as PressWise and Article 19 have been concerned about this issue over the last few years. There have also been demands for the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) to take a harder line against inaccurate and unfair coverage. Journalists ought to pride themselves on accuracy in the use of words and numbers. That accuracy is flouted so easily when writing about asylum and immigration reveals a lack of professionalism. That journalists apparently accept at face value the highly selective statistics released by the Home Office is a dereliction of journalistic duty. Why has no journalist ever managed to find out from the Home Office the number of asylum applicants at any one time who are under eighteen years of age? Or the number who are women?

As legislation is passing through parliament to radically reduce the right of appeal, why has no journalist been able to find out from the Home Office how many of its initial decisions are eventually overturned on appeal? These are all statistics we don't know because most journalists have been too busy demonising asylum-seekers to ask basic questions.

No doubt there are some areas where this kind of appeal for accuracy and professionalism can make a difference. But, unfortunately, they will have no impact on the tabloid newspapers which dominate this debate: the *Sun*, the *Mail* and the *Express*. The racism of these newspapers is not the result of carelessness or lack of thought. It is a deliberate and systematic campaign of hate which no amount of liberal pleading will unhinge.

At a recent NUJ conference, a black journalist, who had previously worked at the *Daily Mail*, spoke of the culture of racism in the *Mail's* office, which included, he alleges, shouting 'wogs' at the TV screen when black athletes appeared. "The *Daily Mail* is a culture that seeps with deep racism, and it's not just at the *Mail* but throughout the tabloid press," he told delegates. In many other organisations this kind of institutional racism would be identified and challenged. Yet the newspaper industry remains largely untouched by these changes, free to perpetuate racism without any kind of accountability, except to shareholders. That has to end.

The dilemma for liberals is that their request for 'balance' can be ignored if a newspaper so chooses. And yet liberals are unwilling to do anything more than 'request', for fear of offending a sacred cow – freedom of the press. The result is that nothing changes and press-fuelled racist violence against asylum-seekers continues. But the press freedom that was fought for in previous centuries, and which political refugees themselves are especially likely to value, is not the freedom of large corporations to be involved in the industrialised production of racism for profit. The racist coverage of asylum-seekers in the press is a failure of democracy, not its flourishing. Hate can never be compatible with democracy, for hate destroys everything but itself. In the poisonous atmosphere created by the right-wing press, only pseudo-democrats, like the BNP, can prosper.

Of course, censorship is not the solution. After all, the media are part of a circular process, which also includes the state and public opinion. But we must campaign for more than just guidelines. The editors of the tabloids should have to explain to a public inquiry how they can justify their coverage. The PCC must take a much stronger stand, issuing a public censure of those newspapers which systematically distort and mislead in their coverage of an entire group of people. Efforts by the NUJ chapel at the *Daily Express* to protest against their own newspaper's coverage are to be welcomed – but it remains to be seen whether the PCC will support them. The *Express'* editor, Peter Hill, is himself one of the sixteen members of the PCC. [Editor's note: the PCC later rejected the *Express* chapel's complaint, on the grounds that it was outside its jurisdiction.]

No doubt the editors of tabloid newspapers will protest their right to freedom of expression if the slightest pressure was put on them in the way I am suggesting. Yet they themselves have no qualms in calling for an individual, such as Abu Hamza, to be expelled from the country, because he 'preaches hate'.

If only they followed their own advice.

Creating a positive image in the local media

Understanding local TV, radio and newspapers and working with them to improve asylum coverage can have a dramatic impact, says **Terry Williams**.

Love it, hate it, whatever we do we cannot ignore the media. I guess most of us are willing consumers of the news. For me it's breakfast TV through to Newsnight with a few newspapers and radio bulletins to provide me with a fix during the day. Okay, it's my trade, but I expect most of you will check on the news at some stage each day.

But do you believe the news? Beckham is having an affair, Blair has lost his grip, and asylum-seekers are swamping Britain. Most people do, for they become the talking points during coffee breaks at work, in the supermarket queues or at the bar in your local pub. Like it or not the media has a major impact on public thinking and is a serious influence on the decision-makers at local and national level in this country. We have to learn how to get the best deal from the media without breaking the bank by hiring an expensive publicist such as Max Clifford!

So let me start by telling you about myself. I have been a journalist all my working life in roles ranging from reporter to editor on the local press. I have freelanced for locals and nationals and done work for print, radio and television media. For the past 12 years I have run my own project, Media in Mind, which works with vulnerable groups by providing training and support to help people make better use of the media. Most of my work is with refugees, asylum-seekers, mental-health service users and carers. In 1999 I took on a part-time contract as National Co-ordinator for the RAM Project.

RAM was set up by PressWise in response to the ever-growing list of complaints it received about the appalling media coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers in the UK. It has established media networks in cities and large towns in the UK and set up an Exiled Journalists Network.

Before I can present the detail of RAM's work, it is important for us all to appreciate the differences in the media in this country. Which sections of the media would you be prepared to work with? Local or national, newspapers, radio, TV? There is a big difference between trying to deal with the *Daily Mail* and the *Hull Daily Mail* or the *Birmingham Evening Mail*. Local media is much more accountable than national. It is vital that we understand the difference before embarking on a media strategy. You can't ignore the national media but most of the problems stem from the tabloids. An area where you can get results is the local media and RAM's work in recent years, backed up by research we carried out with the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR), proves this.

Let me tell you about the research. In April 2003 I organised a series of regional meetings in the UK, which brought together refugees and asylum-seekers, organisations working on their behalf and local journalists, to look at media coverage and how it could be improved. The meetings took place in Birmingham, Bristol, Dover, Leeds and Liverpool. They particularly considered how to raise the profile of refugee and asylum-seeker voices in media coverage. The Refugee Council and National Union of Journalists



Terry Williams has been the part-time National Co-ordinator for the RAM Project since 2000. Most of his time has been spent on developing and supporting the Regional Media Networks.

Speech to 'Supporting Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children and Young People' Conference in London on 27 Oct 2004

(NUJ) supported the events and ICAR prepared an independent report. The following points emerged:

- There was concern amongst refugees and asylum-seekers, people working on their behalf and local journalists attending the event about the hostile coverage. There was general agreement that the coverage was predominantly unbalanced, poorly researched and hostile – and there were faults on all sides!
- With some notable exceptions, the events revealed how little each sector understood the other's work culture, needs and expectations. Members of the refugee and asylum support sector tended to be suspicious of the media and failed to differentiate between the well-intentioned and the hostile. Most journalists showed little understanding of the pressures under which refugee agencies operate and the difficulties in meeting media demands to respond to tight deadlines.
- Local media are closely connected with the communities they serve and are therefore in a powerful position to influence public opinion while also to some extent reflecting and representing it. Journalists' coverage of refugees and asylum issues depend on how they interpret their role in relation to their community and their responsibilities to report accurately, fairly and ethically. It is up to us to make our case and tell our stories to the media to combat both lies and public hostility.
- Codes of Practice, for example of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) and NUJ and other media organisations, do not deal specifically with refugee and asylum issues and this was thought to reduce their ability to contest unprofessional coverage. The PCC's attitude towards the worst examples of media coverage has been disappointing. The mechanisms that are available, including complaints to editors and producers as well as more informal methods of resolving matters, are not well utilised.
- The media often struggles to access the information it needs to produce comprehensive and accurate reporting of refugee and asylum issues. Journalists find it difficult to get rapid access to official information from both national and local government. They also find it difficult to get human-interest stories from refugees and asylum-seekers themselves or organisations operating on their behalf. We have to work harder at understanding the needs of the media and, using that knowledge, to tell the stories that currently go unreported.
- While some refugees and asylum-seekers appeared happy to talk to the media and others very reluctant and wary, all need support from people who understand their situation and are experienced in how the media works. This is very much the role of the RAM Media Networks. Many refugees and asylum-seekers say they would be prepared to talk to journalists if they showed greater understanding and awareness of refugee and asylum issues. In Glasgow a partnership between the NUJ and Scottish Refugee Council has trained 40 refugees and asylum-seekers – I am glad to say half of them women – in how to work with the media.
- The Dover meeting heard of the benefit of BBC Radio Kent's dedicated Immigration and Asylum Correspondent, the use of communication strategies and the appointment of media officers by consortia (for example, Yorkshire and Humberside) and refugee organisations.

RAM Refugee Media Networks

At the heart of RAM's work are the Refugee Media Networks we have set up around the UK in recent years. We have organised around 15 such groups. Each one is voluntary and for this reason has a different profile. The groups are based on the natural clusters of local media around the country. For example, in your area you might have a main evening paper, a morning paper, a number of weeklies, several radio stations and a couple of TV stations. This makes it much easier to build relationships and work with local journalists.

We bring together people who want to see balanced coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers and issues that impact on their lives. The group will include refugees and asylum-seekers, organisations and individuals working on their behalf, unions such as the NUJ, churches and groups such as Oxfam, Amnesty and Student Action for Refugees.

These groups set up a local Network to check on media coverage and respond when necessary – but also place stories in the media. The Network usually communicates with members by e-groups and develops its work through media training. This training is especially important for refugees and asylum-seekers – usually the missing voice in media coverage.

The Media Networks work closely with the NUJ and individual members often involve themselves in local networks. The NUJ has its own national campaign of support for refugees and asylum-seekers. We have also set up and support an Exiled Journalists Network (EJN) of some 150 refugee journalists in the UK and work to find placements and jobs in the media for members. We also provide additional media training for this group with the help of the NUJ. The EJN is working towards becoming an independent group in the very near future. We need these men and woman at the frontline of the UK media. As people who have fled persecution, they have first hand experience of why people come to this country – something that is so often missing from UK journalism.

RAM also produces a free monthly electronic newsletter which has a refugee journalist as a guest editor every month. Many of the articles are contributed by EJN members. It examines media coverage, offers advice on getting the best results from the media and provides a comprehensive What's On section for events that should be of interest to the media. We send it out to 1,800 organisations and individuals – including journalists.

What motivates the media?

Simple. It's getting a good story. Too many journalists get a 'high' when their by-line is on a story and spend too little time thinking of the consequences of what they report. A lot of that can be put down to the ever-increasing pressure on journalists as we see more media in the UK, and fewer journalists as accountants have their way.

Media interest in the BNP and its constant verbal (and physical) attacks on refugees and asylum-seekers has been an unfortunate feature of recent years. The BNP's extreme views are often to be found in the letters pages of local papers and we need to do more to work with local editors to ensure they know the facts about asylum in order to edit out the lies and myths which extremists send to the press. We also need to remember that those letters pages are open to us and we can challenge the lies and promote positive messages in this same way.

Use the 'mythbusters'

People often ask me where they can get the facts. There is little point in challenging statements in the media if you are unable to present the truth. This is easy – there are 'mythbuster' websites run by many organisations including the Refugee Council, Amnesty and Oxfam. RAM's website will help you find others. Some of these organisations can let you have information in hard copy form. Just check the facts and respond to the media. It is vital that when a lie appears in the media, it is challenged and corrected. It is also important that journalists know when something is wrong and in this way can help stop the spread of myths and lies.

Responsible reporting – the difficulties

How often do we reach out to the media and start to explain just who is living in local communities? We must put a human face to asylum-seekers and refugees and get the media to break away from one-sided statistics that easily make a horror headline. Refugees and asylum-seekers are the expert voices. They can provide that information. And we can make sure that refugees and asylum-seekers are trained and supported so they can talk directly to the media.

Journalists still tell me it is so difficult to get hold of refugee groups, refugees and asylum-seekers to speak to. We need to start to take control of media coverage by preparing the stories we want to tell and training spokespeople. We need to understand the pressure on journalists and how we can turn this to our advantage.

How often are the stories about the luxury lifestyles of asylum-seekers repeated, how they jump the council housing queues and (to use a well-known word) 'swamp' our health services? Are we quick and effective at denying these stories or working with reporters to make sure they know the truth? Aren't there, for example, real stories in the number of refugee doctors who remain without work in this country while we have an overstretched NHS, or the levels of homelessness?

And why do the horror stories find their way into the media? Because they are usually so much easier to find than positive stories – especially if someone doesn't deny the story or put forward a stronger one (how many journalists have actually visited the accommodation given to refugees or tried to live on the low levels of benefits given to families)? How often does the media report on the voluntary work carried out by refugees and asylum-seekers, or the often high achievement of their sons and daughters in our schools? Do we actually tell journalists about these stories?

We know why people are reluctant, even scared of talking to the media. Chase back most people's worries and they will stem from a story in one of the tabloids. We have to help people understand the difference between the local and national media, know how the media operates and how to handle interviews. We need more media-trained refugees and asylum-seekers, and more help with media work for voluntary organisations.

So where do we go from here?

- Set up a Refugee Media Forum or join an existing one in your area
- Get some media training
- Get to know local journalists
- Start giving the media some positive stories
- Watch the difference! It's happened in other areas.

Who's who in the RAM Project



Nazand Begikhani Information Officer

An Iraqi Kurdish academic and journalist, Nazand is a consultant for both www.kurdistanpost.com and www.kurdishmedia.com. She worked as the *RAM Bulletin* editor from October 2000 to June 2001, and was also the Project's Information Officer.



Anna Kelson Projects and IT Manager

Anna joined the organisation in 2000 from the commercial sector to assist with project development. She was responsible for project evaluation, fund-raising, research, initial website development and IT. Her post was entirely funded from project-related grants and commissions, and she left in 2005.



Nick Cater Co-ordinator

A former *Guardian* journalist and media co-ordinator for Bob Geldof's SportAid, Nick did research and development for the first phase of the RAM Project and then moved on to international work. He is still a RAM Project advisor, working on European networking.



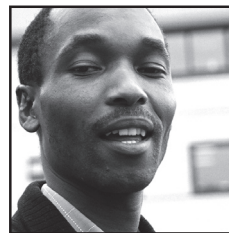
Di Kent PA to the Director

Di joined PressWise in 1997, and is now PA to the Director. She runs the office, liaises with clients and partners, manages the Trust's overseas contracts and is involved in all aspects of the organisation's administration.



Rich Cookson Researcher and writer

Rich is a freelance writer and investigative journalist. A former editor of *The Big Issue South West*, his work has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Observer*, *Daily Mail* and on BBC TV. He sub-edited the *RAM Bulletin* during 2004.



Forward Maisokwadzo Comms. Officer

Forward is an exiled journalist from Zimbabwe. He worked on the *Zimbabwe Independent*, and has freelanced for the *South African Sunday Times*, *UK Sunday Times*, *Voice of America* and the *Guardian*. He holds an MA in International Journalism from City University. He is now developing the Exiled Journalists Network.



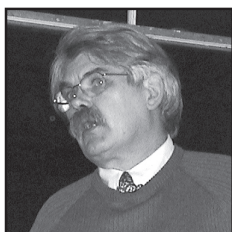
Hildegard Dumper National Liaison

Hildegard is a voluntary- and public-sector management consultant. She is the author of *Refugees Included* for the Red Cross and *Women as Asylum-seekers*, set up the Refugee Women's Legal Group, and won a Human Rights Award from Liberty in 1999.



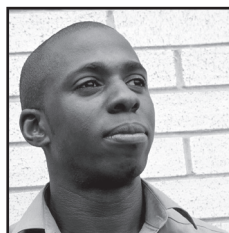
Nick Medic Communications Officer

A freelance journalist from Serbia who sought asylum in the UK in 1992, Nick was Communications Officer from 2003 to 2004, helping exiled journalists get work with the UK media. His work has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Scotsman*, and *DJ Magazine*.



Mike Jempson RAM Project Manager

Mike is the founder and director of MediaWise. A campaigning journalist, author and trainer, he has over 30 years' experience in the trade. He is Media and Child Rights Co-ordinator for the International Federation of Journalists, has conducted ethics training for journalists in over 20 countries, and has worked on media issues with UNESCO, UNICEF, the WHO and the EC.



Ricky Nelson Administrator

Ricky worked for PressWise in 2003 and 2004. He studied politics the University of the West of England, and contributed articles on politics to the student magazine. He published the monthly *RAM Bulletin*, managed the e-groups and edited the website.



Wayne Powell *Researcher and webmaster*

Wayne graduated from the University of the West of England in January 2003 with a Masters degree in History. He joined MediaWise in March 2003 as a researcher and webmaster. At university, he wrote for two student magazines, mostly about films.



Terry Williams *UK National Co-ordinator*

Terry is a journalist who has been the part-time National Co-ordinator for the Project since 2000. Most of his time has been spent developing the Regional Media Networks. His business, Media in Mind, works to improve media representation of vulnerable groups.

The RAM team has also been assisted by media researchers Tammy Speers, Jan Taylor and Liz Fekete, and former ITN and *Times* correspondent Bill Norris. Additional support has also been provided by Tony Goldman and Lionel Morrison who run Diversity Online.

Advisory team

The following have also been RAM Project advisers:

Vanessa Bucolli

Vanessa is Asylum Co-ordinator at Cardiff University's Refugee Media Group in Wales, which was set up, with support from the RAM Project, to monitor Welsh media, and counter gender stereotypes and misinformation in the media by working with asylum-seekers and refugees.

Beth Crosland

Beth has worked at ICAR since it was founded in 2001. She is responsible for projects about media images of refugees and asylum-seekers, and about improving relations between refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities at a local level. She represents ICAR on the Home Office National Refugee Integration Forum subgroup on Positive Images, has worked with a number of refugee agencies and has carried out research into human smuggling and its effects on asylum-seekers and asylum policy in Europe.

Robert Egwea

A Ugandan journalist who specialises in refugee issues, Robert was exiled in 1990. He launched *Uganda Today* magazine and worked with the Refugee Arrivals Project before moving on to Croydon Refugee Forum.

Mohammed Elsharif

Mohammed is a Sudanese journalist and translator deeply involved in the local community in Bristol – he is secretary of the Bristol Sudanese Association and works as a presenter and producer for Commonwealth Museum FM Community Radio.

Brian Jones

A former MediaWise trustee, former Deputy Editor of *The Guardian* and founder-director of the Guardian Foundation, Brian has worked internationally with journalists from China, eastern and central Europe, India, Malaysia and Romania.

Tim Lezard

Tim is President of the National Union of Journalists, which encourages its members to fairly portray refugees and asylum-seekers in the media. He has worked as a reporter for the *Gloucestershire Gazette*, the *Gloucestershire Echo*, the *Gloucester Citizen* and the *Western Daily Press*. He has also edited the satirical cricket monthly *JM96** and *The Big Issue South West*. He currently writes for magazines and newspapers, carries out media training and is the media officer for the South West TUC and UNISON South West.

Resources and further reading

This selection of web-based resources used by the RAM Project does not claim to be comprehensive (apologies to those inadvertently missed out) but should prove useful to those wishing to gather information about refugees and asylum-seekers or report them fairly and accurately.

MediaWise RAM Project

www.mediawise.org.uk

www.ramproject.org.uk

MediaWise provides information, advice, research and training on media ethics, and helps those with complaints about the media. Its website contains an A-Z of UK media organisations and over 200 journalistic codes of conduct from around the world. The Refugees, Asylum-seekers & the Media Project website includes use-of-the-media guides, a *Bulletin* archive, a directory of exiled journalists, a bank of features on asylum issues, an events diary and links to other sites.

ICAR

www.icar.org.uk

The website for the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees provides up-to-date, accurate information on asylum and refugees in the UK, with digests of relevant publications, information about the experience of specific refugee populations in the UK; databases of projects, publications and research completed and in progress, summary profiles of asylum and refugees in UK towns and cities, a series of statistical papers and snapshots; and links to other UK asylum and refugee sector websites.

Media packs/myth-busting

Diversity Online Media HateWatch

www.diversity-online.org

A repository of hate stories and analysis of media stories.

North of England Refugee Service

www.refugee.org.uk/asylum_myths.htm

Oxfam

www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/conflict_disasters/asylum_truth.htm

Refugee Action

www.refugee-action.org/RA2_Bogus_asylum_seekers_and_soft_touch_Britain.doc
www.refugee-action.org/RA1_Refugees_and_asylum_seekers_the_economic_argument.doc

Refugee Council

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/news/myths/myth001.htm

Scottish Asylum-seekers Consortium

www.asylumscotland.org.uk/mythsfacts.html

Scottish Refugee Council

www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

UK communications and media strategies

Association of Chief Police Officers

www.acpo.police.uk/policies/index.html

Policing guide on asylum-seekers and refugees

Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Consortium

www.lga.gov.uk/lga/asylum/mediapack.pdf

Regional media and PR strategy for the dispersal of asylum-seekers to Yorkshire and the Humberside

www.leeds.gov.uk/downloads/200317_40034121.pdf

UK media regulatory bodies

Advertising Standards Authority www.asa.org.uk

BBC www.bbc.co.uk/complaints

Chartered Institute of Journalists www.ioj.co.uk

Commission for Racial Equality

www.cre.gov.uk/media/media_comps.html

MediaWise www.mediawise.org.uk

National Union of Journalists www.nuj.org.uk

Ofcom (broadcasting regulator) www.ofcom.org.uk

Press Complaints Commission www.pcc.org.uk

Publications

BBC Migration World

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/special/migration

BBC Windrush www.bbc.co.uk/history/society_culture/multicultural/windrush_01.shtml

Canadian Journalists for Free Expression www.cjfe.org

Clandestines - Life and Death at Dover:

www.clandestines.info

European Journal of Migration and Law

www.kluweronline.com/issn/1388-364x

Exile Images www.exileimages.co.uk

Exiled Writers' Ink www.exiledwriters.co.uk

Forced Migration Review www.fmreview.org

Gypsy Expressions www.gypsyexpressions.org.uk

Institute for Public Policy Research

www.ippr.org/research/index.php?current=19

Institute for War and Peace Reporting www.iwpr.net

International Documentation and Communication Centre www.ines.org/inpagina

Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies

www.cemes.org

Maison des Journalistes

www.maisondesjournalistes.org

Metroeireann www.metroeireann.com

Migrant Media <http://homepages.poptel.org.uk/migrantmedia/docs/migrant.htm>

OneWorld Broadcasting Trust www.owbt.org

Runnymede Trust www.runnymedetrust.org

Statewatch www.statewatch.org

UN Agencies

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights www.unhchr.ch

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees www.unhcr.ch

United Nations Children's Fund www.unicef.org

United Nations Human Settlements Programme www.unhabitat.org

International

Amnesty International www.amnesty.org

Asian Migrant Centre www.asian-migrants.org

Asylum Law www.asylumlaw.org

Campaign for the Ratification of the Convention of the Rights of Migrants www.migrantsrights.org

Captive Daughters www.captivedaughters.org

CARE (Christian Action Research & Education) www.care.org

Commission for Filipino Migrants www.cfmw.org/index.html

Co-operation for the Development of Emerging Countries www.cospe.it

December 18 www.december18.net

Federation of Centers for Migration Studies www.scalabrini.org/fcms

Global Disaster Information Network www.gdin-international.org

Globally Internally Displaced Project www.idpproject.org

Human Rights Watch: Refugees www.hrw.org/refugees

International Council of Voluntary Agencies www.icva.ch

International Crisis Group www.crisisweb.org

International Organisation for Migration www.iom.int

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement www.icrc.org

Jesuit Refugee Service www.jesref.org

Kalayaan www.geocities.com/makakalayaan

Lutheran World Federation www.lutheranworld.org

Mathaba.net www.mathaba.net/www/black

Migrant Rights International www.migrantwatch.org

Migration Dialogue www.migration.ucdavis.edu

Minority Rights Group International www.minorityrights.org

Organisation of American States www.oas.org

Redress www.redress.org

Refugees International www.refugeesinternational.org

Relief Web www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation www.unpo.org

War Resisters International www.wri-irg.org

World Association for Christian Communication www.wacc.org.uk

World Council of Churches www.wcc-coe.org

World Organisation Against Torture

www.woatusa.org

World Refugee Survey

www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/alphaindex.htm

Europe-wide

European Campaign on Women Asylum-seekers

www.womenlobby.org/asylumcampaign

European Council for Refugees and Exiles

www.ecre.org

European Country of Origin Information Network

www.ecoi.net

European Forum for Migration Studies

www.uni-bamberg.de/%7Eba6ef3/main_e.htm

European Monitoring Centre on Racism & Xenophobia

www.eumc.eu.int/eumc/index.php

European Network on Integration of Refugees

www.refugeenet.org

European Red Cross Co-operation on Refugees, Asylum-seekers and Migrants

www.ifrc.org/what/response/refugees/perco/index.asp

European Research Centre of Migration and Ethnic Relations

www.ercomer.org

European Roma Information Centre www.erionet.org

European Roma Rights Centre www.errc.org

Filipino Youth Network in Europe

www.home.zonnet.nl/fyneeurope

International Center for Migration Policy

Development www.icmpd.org

Internet Centre Anti-Racism Europe www.icare.to

Online/More Colour in the Media www.olmcm.org

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe www.osce.org

Platform of Filipino Migrant Organisations in Europe

www.platformweb.org

UNITED for Intercultural Action

www.united.non-profit.nl

UK

1990 Trust www.blink.org.uk

Assisting Marsh Arabs and Refugees

www.amarappeal.com

Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees

www.aviddetention.org.uk

Asylum Aid www.asylumaid.org.uk

Asylum Rights www.asylumrights.net

Asylum Support www.asylumsupport.info

Black Women's Website Against Racist Sexual

Violence www.bwrap.dircon.co.uk

- Bristol Defend Asylum-seekers**
www.asylumbristol.org.uk
- British Red Cross**
www.redcross.org.uk/homepage.asp
- Child Migrant Trust**
www.nottscg.gov.uk/child_migrants/cmt.htm
- Child Migrants**
www.childmigrants.com
- Christian Aid**
www.christian-aid.org.uk
- Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA)**
www.academic-refugees.org
- East London Somali Initiative Bridge Project**
www.bridgeproject.co.uk
- Electronic Immigration Network**
www.ein.org.uk
- End Child Segregation**
www.segregation.org.uk
- Evelyn Oldfield Unit**
www.evelynoldfield.co.uk
- Forced Migration**
www.forcedmigration.org
- Globalise Resistance**
www.resist.org.uk
- Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum-seekers**
members.lycos.co.uk/garas
- HACT Refugee Funding and Housing Programme**
www.hact.org.uk/refugee
- Swansea Bay Asylum-seekers Support Group**
www.hafan.org
- Immigration and Asylum Resource Project home.**
btconnect.com/Asian-Resource-C/IARP
- Immigration Index**
www.asylumsupport.info/links.htm
- Immigration Law Practitioners' Association**
www.ilpa.org.uk
- Immigration Watch**
www.immigrationwatch.info
- Institute of Race Relations**
www.irr.org.uk
- Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants**
www.jcwi.org.uk
- Kent Refugee Action Network**
www.canterburylabour.org.uk/kran.htm
- LSE Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism** *www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/European/Asen*
- Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture** *www.torturecare.org.uk*
- Migration and Ethnicity Research Centre**
www.shef.ac.uk/merc/indec.html
- Migration Research Unit**
www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/mru
- Multicultural Skyscraper** *www.multicultural.net*
- National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux**
www.nacab.org.uk
- National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns**
www.ncadc.org.uk
- North of England Refugee Service**
www.refugee.org.uk
- Nottingham Refugees/Asylum-seekers**
www.nottas.org.uk
- Offices of the Immigration Services Commissioner** *www.oisc.gov.uk*
- OneWorld UK**
http://uk.oneworld.net/section/uk/refugees
- Oxfam** *www.oxfam.org.uk*
- Positive Action in Housing (Scotland)** *www.paih.org*
- Praxis** *www.praxis.org.uk*
- Refugee Access**
www.refugeeaccess.info
- Refugee Action**
www.refugee-action.org.uk
- Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service**
www.refugeenet.org
- Refugee Legal Centre**
www.refugee-legal-centre.org.uk
- Refugee Media Group in Wales**
www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/en/centres/96.html
- Refugee Rights**
www.refugeerights.org
- Refugee Save Haven Campaign**
www.safe-haven.org.uk
- Refugee Studies Programme, University of Oxford**
www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/rsp
- Refugee Women's Legal Group**
www.rwlg.org.uk
- Refugees Online**
www.refugeesonline.org.uk
- Sexuality, Gender and Islam Project**
www.safraproject.org
- Scottish Asylum-seekers Consortium**
www.asylumscotland.org.uk
- Segregation**
www.segregation.org.uk
- Shelter** *www.shelter.org.uk*
- Student Action for Refugees**
www.star-network.org.uk
- The Bridge Project**
www.bridgeproject.co.uk
- The Equality Foundation**
www.equalityfoundation.com
- The Gypsy Council**
www.camcnty.gov.uk/sub/resrchgp/travel/gc.htm
- The Home Office** *www.homeoffice.gov.uk*
- The Refuge Project**
www.refugeproject.com
- Tyne and Wear Anti- Fascist Association**
www.twafa.org.uk
- Westminster Diocese Refugee Service**
www.wdrs.org

Income and expenditure

Income	Total £	Monthly average*	Annual average
Grants			
Joseph Rowntree CS Racial Justice Committee	37,500		
Allen Lane Foundation	7,500		
Barrow Cadbury Trust	59,600		
Lord/Stone Ashdown Settlement	10,000		
Home Office Integration Challenge Fund	166,520		
West Midlands Local Government Association	10,900		
Home Office National Refugee Integration Fund	39,000		
UN High Commission for Refugees	2,239		
Comic Relief	30,000		
Open Society Institute	7,572		
Total	370,831	5,619	67,424
Fees			
Online/More Colour in the Media Project	5,067		
ICAR Research/Monitoring Project	9,715		
Sundry	1,848		
Total	16,630	252	3,024
Sundry income			
Donations, conference receipts & sales	1,995		
Total	1,995	30	363
Grand total	389,456	5,901	70,810
Expenditure			
Staffing	123,857	1,877	22,520
Freelances	136,698	2,071	24,854
Travel & subsistence	44,197	670	8,036
Premises	17,397	264	3,163
Website costs	10,584	160	1,924
Services (heat/light/repairs etc)	2,261	34	411
Equipment & research materials	2,944	45	535
Postage, stationery & phone	30,206	458	5,492
Printing & publicity	9,598	145	1,745
Accountancy/banking fees & insurance	3,443	52	626
Room hire & refreshments	6,108	93	1,111
Sundry	3,671	56	667
Grand total	390,964	5,925	71,084

* The RAM Project has been running for a total of 66 months.

Note: These figures are provided for indicative purposes only, to help other organisations understand the cost of running a project such as this.

Funding the RAM Project

The RAM Project was originally envisaged as a short-term programme. It began as an exploratory exercise in 1999 with a small grant of £7,500 and one part-time worker.

Demand for the Project’s services snowballed. It cost £38,500 to run in 2000, and by 2003, with one full-time staff member supplemented by several part-timers and a team of freelancers, it was costing £130,000 a year. The level of funding has fallen off since then, perhaps reflecting the reduction in numbers of people seeking refuge in the UK, although media interest in the issues remains high, and immigration featured heavily in the 2005 General Election campaign.

Inevitably, fundraising became a priority, and at times MediaWise had to subsidise RAM Project activities to ensure it could meet each new challenge, instead of retreating in the face of funding shortages as happens with so many well-intentioned projects.

It now operates within the confines of a budget set by the level of funding achieved in advance, although as new ideas and demands come along funding is sought to fulfil them. For example, there has been a great deal of interest in the Project throughout Europe, and RAM has been commissioned to prepare a report on the needs and conditions of exiled journalists in other parts of the European Union. This is due to be published in late 2005.

With the benefit of hindsight it would have been preferable to pace the Project more equably over a set period, supplementing its basic work with self-financing events and activities. However that requires prescience by funders as well as activists, and the nature, frequency and ferocity of issue-based mass-media campaigns is almost impossible to predict.

The RAM Project was never in a healthy enough financial situation to seek direct funding from European sources, since most European Union funding streams require non-governmental organisations to be able to bankroll projects from their own resources for significant periods. To some extent the RAM Project was ahead of its time, but now the issues it has raised have become the focus

of a wide variety of other projects. Its pioneering work has attracted academic interest and the active involvement of working journalists.

Perhaps one of the most significant results of the Project has been the formation of the Exiled Journalists Network (EJN), which has a drafted a budget (see below) for its first three years, based on the experience of the RAM Project (but paying better wages!). MediaWise will continue to support the RAM Project while funding is available, but the plan is for the EJN to take over and develop it in new directions as the media and political furore over refugees and asylum-seekers recedes.

One key aim of the Project is to ensure that the voices of refugees and asylum-seekers are heard in the media. We hope that through the EJN, those voices will continue to be heard and more refugees will be able to find a place in the UK media so the public can benefit from the breadth and depth of their experience, both as journalists and as survivors of oppression and persecution. To a large extent that depends upon whether funders are prepared to back them.

Exiled Journalists Network – draft budget			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	£	£	£
Overheads & operating costs			
Premises	4,000	10,000	11,000
Services (incl insurance)	1,000	2,000	2,500
Equipment	5,000	2,500	4,000
Stationery & supplies	2,500	3,000	3,500
Telephone	2,000	2,500	3,000
Printing	1,500	2,000	2,500
Travel	5,000	6,000	7,000
Event costs	7,500	10,000	12,500
Legal/accounting fees	3,000	2,000	2,500
Salary costs (gross)			
Co-ordinator	16,500	34,220	35,380
Administrator	19,720	20,880	22,040
Communications Officer	27,840	28,420	29,580
Welfare Officer	0	27,840	29,000
Totals	95,560	151,360	164,500

RAM Project Diary – a selection of milestones

1997 – November

- PressWise 'Ethnic Minorities and the Media Forum', London, supports plan for projects to challenge biased and inaccurate reporting of asylum issues and Travellers/Roma

1999 – August

- 30-agency meeting launches RAM Project

September

- RAM funded by JRCT Racial Justice Committee

2000 – March

- RAM Communication Day, Birmingham launches first local network
- Communication Day, Leeds sets up local network
- Asylum-seekers & Media Workshop, West Midlands
- Meeting with Save The Children, London

June

- Communication Day, Manchester sets up local network
- Communication Day, Liverpool

July

- PCC agrees to attend RAM's regional Communication Days

August

- Communication Day, Leicester

September

- RAM at TUC, Glasgow

October

- First RAM Bulletin published and distributed to 400 activists across the UK and Europe
- RAM media training workshops for West Sussex Social Services
- RAM at third UK Roundtable against Racism and Xenophobia
- RAM media training workshop at the STAR annual conference, Nottingham
- RAM at Bodyshop Foundation

symposium on corporate involvement in challenging perceptions of refugees and asylum-seekers

November

- RAM website (www.ramproject.org.uk) launched
- RAM at ECRE assemblies in Finland and France
- RAM at Finnish Refugee Council seminar for journalists in Helsinki
- RAM runs media training workshop for police and race equality workers at Searchlight Educational Trust seminar 'Communities Combating Hate', Bristol
- Leicester and Liverpool local networks established

December

- Communication Day, Glasgow
- RAM contributes to 4th European Conference on Integration of Refugees, Greece

2001 – January

- Communication Day, Newcastle
- Communication Day, Sheffield

February

- National Refugees, Asylum-seekers & Media Forum, London
- New Vision website launched
- UK Refugee Media Agency mooted

April

- RAM joins Home Office Positive Images Working Group
- Lack of funding slims down Project

June

- RAM website relaunched
- RAM workshop at Refugees, Racism and Asylum Rights' conference, East London University
- Launch of UK Refugee Media Agency at Freedom Forum, London
- Your voice in the media training day for refugees, with Women's Radio Group and Refugees Online, University of London
- Communication Day, Hull

- RAM contributes to Refugee Women's Association AGM, London
- RAM contributes to Asylum-seekers and Mental Health conference, Coventry

August

- *Daily Express* launches bid for readers with anti-asylum front pages
- *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* criticise £80,000 Home Office grant to the RAM Project
- NUJ members at *Daily Express* make collective complaint against their own editors over inflammatory, anti-refugee headlines

September

- Atrocity in USA renews media attacks on refugees and asylum-seekers
- RAM editorial gets wide coverage

November

- Exile On Media Street: The Challenge of Reporting Refugees, RAM session at Newsworld 2001, Barcelona

2002 – July

- RAM at World University Service, London

August

- RAM Team agree new work plan

September

- RAM Advisory Panel convened
- RAM contributes to Reporting the Vulnerable NUJ seminar, London
- RAM at After September 11: TV News and Transnational Audience symposium, London

October

- Guest Editor scheme for RAM *Bulletin* starts
- Sheffield Media Group Meeting
- RAM Team Meeting & Advisory Panel, Bristol
- Coventry Media Group meets
- Liverpool Media Group meeting

November

- Leicester Media Group meets
- RAM at Iriscope Conference: 'Television reporting and portrayal on multicultural related issues', Amsterdam
- RAM contributes to Amnesty Regional Refugees and Media Conference, Leeds
- Nick Medic appointed full-time RAM Communications Officer

December

- RAM at National Assembly Against Racism Conference, London
- RAM at Home Office Evaluation Workshop, Birmingham

2003 – January

- RAM at Refugee Council AGM, London
- RAM Media training in Cardiff and Swansea
- RAM Media training, Birmingham
- Birmingham Media Forum in partnership with Refugee Council
- RAM at Prince's Trust Cultural Concert and Conference, Liverpool Anglican Cathedral

February

- RAM at School of Journalism, De Montfort University
- RAM at European Red Cross Asylum-seekers conference, Athens
- RAM at Food for Thought, Refugee Lifeline event, Sheffield
- RAM at Leeds Media Forum
- Leeds Media Network launch, Civic Hall, Leeds

March

- RAM at Amnesty and NUJ Media Forum, Newcastle
- RAM at Liverpool Media Forum
- RAM at Involving Refugees & Asylum-seekers Merseyside RAM Media Group event, Liverpool
- RAM at The Truth Behind the Headlines, Amnesty Conference, Exeter University
- Bristol Media Forum
- Working in the UK Media, RAM residential weekend, Bristol

April

- RAM at launch of Media Trust's 'Community Channel'
- RAM at Kent Media Forum
- RAM at Cardiff Media Forum

May

- RAM video *On the Receiving End: Exiled journalist speak out* premiered at Article 19 Refugees & Media Research event, London
- Launch of RAM *Directory* and ICAR report on Regional Forums

June

- RAM Media Training for NE refugee activists, Newcastle
- RAM at Gender and Ethnicity seminar, University of Plymouth
- RAM London Media Forum with Refugee Council & NUJ
- RAM at launch of Refugee TV
- RAM contributes to Refugee Action Raising Our Voices: Improving Representation of Refugees in the Media event, London
- RAM workshop at Home Office UK National Integration Conference, Birmingham

July

- RAM at Online/More Colour in the Media event, Amsterdam, to plan European Media Monitoring Project and Day of Action
- RAM launches investigation into *The Sun's*: 'Swan Bake: Asylum-seekers steal the Queen's birds for barbecues' front page 'exclusive'
- Exiled journalists make collective complaint to PCC over Swan Bake
- RAM workshop at Protect the Refugee Child conference, Birmingham
- RAM contributes variously to BBC Asylum Day

August

- GLA meeting, Mayor's Office Project Advisory Group Meeting. Terry Williams attends
- RAM launches investigation into Daily Star front page 'exclusive' 'Asylum-seekers eat our donkeys'

September

- RAM at Roma and Asylum in Britain: global issues, local concerns conference, University of Newcastle
- RAM at Asylum and Migration: Managing the Debate, Labour Party Conference, Blackpool

October

- PCC bows to pressure and issues guidance to editors about reporting on refugee and asylum issues
- RAM at Refugee Integration Forum meeting with HO Minister Beverley Hughes MP
- RAM contributes to Right to Refuge Conference, London
- RAM at Mira Media European Day of Monitoring event, Amsterdam

November

- RAM contributes to Amnesty International Middle East/North Africa Conference, London
- RAM at Respect Not Racism conference, organised by Mayor of London and NAAR
- RAM at Jewish Socialists Group *Kristallnacht* event, London
- PCC finds for exiled journalists in Swan Bake story complaint
- *The Sun* publishes 'correction' on page 41
- RAM at Amnesty Scotland launch of *Guide for Journalists*
- RAM at Amnesty NE meeting and Leeds Asylum Media Group
- RAM organises Media Day at British Council A Sense of Place conference, Cardiff

December

- RAM at STAR meeting, Bristol
- RAM training at Sandwell Council myth-busters event
- RAM at Merseyside Refugee Support Network
- RAM weekend event for exiled journalists, Bristol
- RAM screens *On the Receiving End* at Visible Evidence XI event at Watershed Arts Centre, Bristol

2004 – January

- RAM at Norfolk Asylum Media Group launch
- RAM training at Dover Asylum Media Group
- RAM at Liverpool Refugee Media Group
- RAM at Merseyside NUJ meeting
- RAM at Leeds Asylum Media Group meeting

February

- RAM Media training for refugee housing group, London
- RAM at Brent Refugee Media Forum, London
- RAM at Online/More Colour in the Media meeting on European Week Of Action, Amsterdam
- RAM at Freedom for Kurdish Journalists meeting, London
- RAM at Praxis Refugee Community Organisations event, London
- RAM video screened at Indymedia Films event, Bristol
- RAM contributes to Mainstream Media Bias conference, London

March

- RAM *On the Receiving End* screening Frontline Club, London
- RAM at Media Forum, Leicester
- RAM at Images of Asylum-seekers and Refugees conference, London
- RAM at Brent Refugee Forum and Refugee Week meetings, London
- RAM at Amnesty NE Regional Conference, York
- RAM contributes to NUJ Black Members Council event Face to Face with Racism: Media Portrayal of Ethnic Minorities and the Upsurge of the Far Right, Leeds
- European Week of Media Action
- EJM members take part in BBC placements scheme
- RAM at Refugee Council Working Together for New Communities event, Peterborough
- RAM at NUJ Ethics Council event at NUJ Annual Conference, Liverpool

April

- RAM at launch of Amnesty's A Safe Place video, London
- RAM at Employment Orientation for Overseas Trained Journalists seminar, London
- RAM training for Refugee Week contributors, London
- RAM video shown at Refugee Action Information Day, Bristol
- RAM attends Graduation Day at Education Action International
- RAM training for Refugee Week contributors, Birmingham

May

- RAM training at Brent Refugee Media Forum, London
- EJM members at NUJ 'Working As A Freelance' training, London
- RAM conference for Regional Media Networks, Birmingham
- RAM at North East Refugees and the Media event, Newcastle

June

- RAM at seminar on ICAR/RAM Media Image, Community Impact research findings, London
- RAM at Asylum Rights Campaign (ARC) relaunch, London
- RAM at AMITY group Media Conference, Leicester
- RAM at IPPR New Challenges for Community Cohesion and Race Equality event, London
- RAM at West London Media Forum
- RAM at Brent Refugee Forum
- RAM at Croydon Refugee Forum
- RAM at STAR Roadshow, Bristol
- RAM contributes to Home Office National Integration Conference

July

- RAM training at Glasgow Asylum Media Forum
- RAM contributes to UN Global Commission on International Migration seminar, London
- RAM training at Birmingham Media Forum
- RAM training at Brent Refugee Media Forum, London
- RAM at Croydon Refugee Media Forum meeting

- RAM at launch of ICAR/GLA research, City Hall, London
- RAM at Enriching Communities conference, Museum of London
- RAM/EJM at Building the Evidence Base: Refugees and Asylum-seekers in London event,
- RAM at Aspire debate What is the future of black media professionals?, London

August

- RAM training at Young Asylum-seekers Media Group, Save the Children, London

September

- RAM at Manchester Refugee Consortium
- RAM at West London Refugee Forum meeting
- RAM at Birmingham Refugee Media Network
- RAM at Coventry Media Network
- RAM workshops at Refugee Council event, Luton
- RAM workshop and screening at Tuning into Diversity conference, Leiden, Netherlands
- RAM at planning meeting for Peterborough RAM network
- RAM at West London Refugee Media Network

October

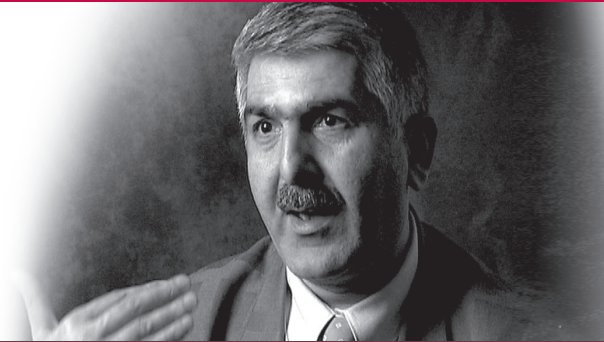
- RAM at NUJ/Oxfam meetings, Glasgow
- RAM/EJM at European Social Forum, London
- RAM at launch of West Midlands Media Network, Birmingham
- RAM at UN Assoc Asylum and Immigration conference, Croydon
- RAM at Supporting Refugee Young People conference, London
- EJM Meeting, London
- RAM workshop at STAR National Conference, Nottingham

November

- RAM at launch of Glasgow Media Network
- RAM training at Refugees in Effective & Active Partnership AGM



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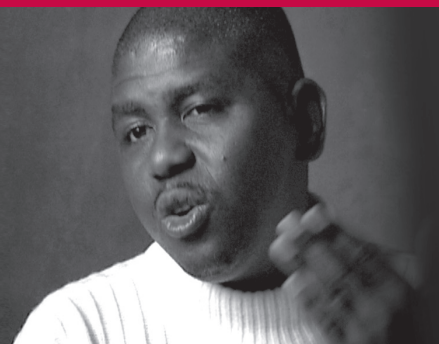
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